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MEMORIAL

OF ▲

CHRISTIAN LIFE,

CONTAINING

ALL THAT A SOUL NEWLY CONVERTED TO GOD OUGHT
TO DO, THAT IT MAY ATTAIN THE PERFECTION
TO WHICH IT OUGHT TO ASPIRE

BY THE

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P R E F A C E.

As the inclinations and judgments of writers have been different, so have they disposed themselves to treat of different matters. Some, charmed with the beauty of eloquence, have labored to frame an excellent orator: they have taken him from the cradle, and conducted him through all the steps and degrees of this art, till they have brought him to the highest point to which he could be raised. Others have attempted to represent a perfect prince; others, a great captain; others, a wise courtier; and in these different designs every one of them has proposed to himself the advancing of that which he most esteemed. But, of all human things, there is none so noble as a perfect CHRISTIAN. The holy authors name him a heavenly man, or an earthly angel; and it is with reason they give him this quality, since, being destined to a supernatural end, he leads a divine life. Thus, since all other conditions, which are as much below this as their end is inferior, have had masters who have taught with so much care, from their first elements even to their last period, what was necessary to render one accomplished in them, how much more just is it to prescribe rules for this heavenly profession, which so much the more stands in need of being faithfully taught, as the perfection of it is more difficult to be attained.

This has made me a long time desirous to see in some one book the manner of forming a perfect Christian, in order that such a book might be, as it were, an abridgment of

whatever belongs to the conduct of a Christian in this life. For, as good workmen take care to furnish themselves with all instruments necessary for their trade, and as those who apply themselves to any art or science do all they can to have some book in which they may find whatever concerns the knowledge they would acquire, that they may ease their memory by enclosing it, as it were, in one only place, so it seems to me very expedient to do the same in the science of Christianity, which is the art of arts and science of sciences; to the end, that such as desire to serve God sincerely, having this little treatise, may find in it light enough for the direction of their lives, and that the preachers and confessors who are zealous for the public, may without much pains, draw from it whatever is necessary for the infusing of true piety into the souls of their hearers.

I know that we do not want, at this day, books which treat of this matter; but each of them have in a manner some particular end to which they are directed. As for catechisms, though they contain a summary of Christianity, and all that pertains to it, yet, since their principal aim tends only to explain the substance of things, and cause them to be comprehended, their doctrine is more speculative, and fitter to enlighten the understanding, than to affect the will.

Wherefore I am resolved, by the grace of God, and with the assistance I hope to receive from the writings of the holy fathers, who have spoken of these matters in divers places, to compose this book, which I assume to draw from their sentiments and sentences, for the framing a perfect Christian, and conducting him through all the states and exercises of this life, from the beginning of his conversion to the utmost perfection he can acquire. I propose to myself, for this purpose, to take him quite rough and unwrought, like the trunk of a tree cut down upon a barren mountain, with its branches and bark, and to polish him little by little, till I have brought him to the perfect state to

which he ought to aspire. To this end, I will set before his eyes, in my first book, heaven and hell, with the advantages that accompany virtue, and the obligations we have to follow it, and will endeavor to persuade him, by these considerations, to take a strong resolution of leaving vice, and firmly applying himself to God's service.

This resolution being formed, I teach him, in the second book, how he must do penance; because this is the first step he has to take, that he may enter into this way. I propose to him several considerations, and divers prayers, which may serve to make him conceive all possible regret and horror for the sins of his past life; and I afterwards instruct him how he must confess himself, and make a satisfaction proportionate to his offences. After confession follows communion, and therefore, in my third book, I give him counsels and precepts for communicating worthily, with prayers, which he may use before and after communion.

Amendment of life ought to be the fruit of these two sacraments: on which I enlarge myself in my fourth book. But because in the Christian life some content themselves with doing only what is necessary for their salvation, and others, willing to go farther, and tend to perfection, are not satisfied with a simple observation of the commandments, but oblige themselves also to follow the counsels, I prescribe two rules of living well; one more common, for the first, and another more strict and spiritual, for the others.

A book, in which every private person succinctly sets down his private affairs, is ordinarily termed a MEMORIAL: I have given the same name to this, because I have compendiously treated all I have comprised in it; though I have not so much studied brevity, but that I have also endeavored to set down all that was necessary for my subject. It is true, the theme is copious and plentiful, and there are many things to be said which cannot be sufficiently expressed, but I leave this to other writers. Yet, if it shall please God to prolong the course of this my life, which passes away with

so much speed, I may treat more at large some parts of this doctrine, and, in particular, give the public an Exhortation, with rules for leading a good life, a Treatise on the Love of God, and on the Life of JESUS CHRIST.

It is true, that what I assume is properly a work of the Holy Ghost, and that to him alone belongs the forming a perfect Christian. But, as grace excludes not labor, which, on the contrary, ought to concur with it, so God's interior instruction excludes not the exterior instruction which comes from men; but, on the contrary, necessarily requires it. This office particularly pertains to the priests and ministers of the church; it is to them that God sends us to be informed of his law. Wherefore, amongst the ornaments with which the high-priest, in the old law was clothed, there was one named the Rational, which he wore on his breast, having engraven on it these words, "*Doctrine and Truth,*" (*Exod. xxi.*) to show that these two things ought to be in Aaron's heart, that from thence, as from a plentiful spring, they might run down upon all the rest. This function is so important and so considerable, that Moses, by the counsel of his father-in-law Jethro, reserved it to himself alone. *Exod. xviii.* This prudent old man advised him to commit to other judges the lighter affairs, and the judgments that concerned temporal matters; but that he should reserve to himself religion and God's worship, and should take for his own province the care of teaching the people the ceremonies of the law, and in what manner they ought to serve God. This is what God requires of his priests; and some of them whom he had called to this dignity having been so unhappy as to neglect the duty of their charge, he addressed to them these amazing words by the mouth of the prophet: "Because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will reject thee, that thou shalt not do the office of priesthood to me." *Osee iv. 6.* And in another place he again threatens them with this punishment, by the prophet Isaias, as with the most dreadful calamity that could befall them, saying: that because of their

great sins he would punish them with a terrible punishment, which should be, that "wisdom" should "perish from their wise men, and the understanding of their prudent men" should be "hid." *Isaias* xxix. 14.

After this, none can doubt but that as the want of this wisdom is one of the greatest chastisements which can be inflicted on such as have the conduct of souls, so it is no less terrible to those who are to receive their instructions. For the light of the understanding being taken away, which is, as it were, the author of every change that is made in the soul, and like the principal wheel of a clock, that governs and moves the Christian life, what can afterwards be expected but blindness, extravagance, and other disorders of that nature?

This sentiment is none of mine, the whole Scripture showing us, that all these evils have no other source. See here what the Almighty God says of them by the mouth of *Isaias*: "For it is not a wise people; therefore he that made it, shall not have mercy on it; and he that formed it, shall not spare it." *Isaias* xxvii. 11. And in another place he says: "Therefore is my people led away captive, because they had not knowledge, and their nobles have perished with famine, and their multitude were dried up with thirst." *Chap.* v. 13. The prophet *Baruch* confirms the same thing, when he says, that the true cause of the children of Israel's captivity, and of their miseries in strange lands, was, that they had "forsaken the Fountain of Wisdom." *Bar.* iii. 12. He gives also this only reason for the destruction of the giants—that is, the great men of the world: "Because," says he, "they had not wisdom, they perished through their folly." *Ib.* v. 28. And it is to remedy this evil that St. Paul, writing to the Colossians, expressly charges them to take care that the word and doctrine of Jesus Christ be incessantly preached amongst them, and that they mutually teach, and charitably advise one another what they are obliged to do.

There is no trade, how mean soever, but has its rules for the well performing it: how much more necessary, then, is it to have them in the highest of all exercises, which is to please God, to serve him, to gain the kingdom of heaven, and to surmount the strength and stratagems of our enemy? How can an ignorant man know a thing which so much imports him, if there are not set before his eyes the promises and threatenings of Almighty God, and the obligations he has to serve him? How can he conceive a sorrow for his sins, if he is not made to understand the reasons he has to be afflicted for them? How can he communicate worthily, if he is not taught what is necessary for the making a good communion? How can he regulate his life, seek virtue, and shun vice, if he know not the means to obtain the one, and resist the other, nor understand the temptations and artifices of the enemy? How shall he make a good prayer, and how can he accompany it with the conditions it requires if he has not been instructed in them? How shall he attain to the love of God, if he is ignorant of the way that leads to it, of the things that hinder it, and of the exercises he must do to merit it? We have need of all this light for all these different things: we bring it not with us at our birth; on the contrary, we may say, with truth, there is nothing that better represents our condition than the man in the gospel, who was blind from his mother's womb.

It is indeed the office of preachers to cure this blindness by the light of God's word: but these are not every where to be found; nor do they all treat of these matters which are so necessary; nor yet, speaking as they ordinarily do in general, can they easily descend to such particularities as this moral doctrine demands, which, respecting particular exercises, requires also particular precepts, which are not usually given in pulpits. Wherefore there is nothing more profitable than the reading of good books. They are, as it were, constant preachers, which teach at all times: how long soever they may be, they are never tiresome, because

one may leave them when one will; and if they are short, one always gets some benefit by frequent reading them over. How great are the fruits of God's word; and who shall explain the doctrine of his Church? It is as a light which enlightens our minds, as a fire which heats our wills, as a hammer which softens the hardness of our hearts, as a knife which pares away the superfluities of our passions, as a torch which lights us in all the passages of this life, as a seed which brings forth the fruits of eternal life; and, in fine, as a wholesome food and nourishment, which sustains us, refreshes us, and gives strength and vigor to our souls, to bring them to God.

Experience renders us knowing in this truth: the light and fruit which come from reading are so great, that we ordinarily see most people change their lives only by this way: and if many sinners should be asked, what was the occasion and beginning of their conversion, they would almost continually answer, that it must be attributed to the reading of some book of devotion, which moved them to take that resolution. Do we not know, how that officer of the queen of Ethiopia, was reading in his chariot the prophet Isaias, when God converted him by the means of St. Philip, who took occasion from that reading to instruct him in the faith? *Acts viii.* And whence proceeded so many heroical actions, as king Josias did during the whole course of his reign, but from his having read a holy book, which was sent him by the priest Helchias, as we learn out of the book of Kings? *4 Kings xxii.*

And to furnish us with a memorable example, does not St. Augustin acknowledge, that he owes his conversion to a book on which he fortunately cast his eyes: he himself gives us an account of it in the eighth book of his Confessions; and because it is a thing which deserves for ever to be imprinted in your minds, I will repeat to you his words at length.

He says then, that "a certain African gentleman, named

Potitianus, being come to visit him, told him wonderful things which the world published of the great St. Anthony; and he added, that the emperor being one afternoon busied in beholding certain public spectacles in the town of Triers, this gentleman, with three of his friends, who attended the court, agreed to go walk abroad into the fields; that two of them came by chance to a monk's cell, where finding a book which contained the life of St. Anthony, one of them began to read it; and that feeling his heart on a sudden inflamed with holy love, touched with a religious shame, and animated with a just anger against himself, he said these words to his friend: 'What do we pretend to obtain by all our care and toil? What do we seek? Why have we so many years engaged ourselves in war and battles? If we should attain to the height of our desires, can we hope for any better fortune than to be esteemed by the emperor? And in that very state, what is there that is not frail and exposed to dangers? And through how many perils must we run to arrive at this extreme peril? In the meantime, if I desire to be loved by my God, I may immediately be so.' He spoke these words, being troubled and agitated with the labor which the bringing forth of the new life gave him; he cast his eyes again on the book—he read; he was inwardly changed, and entirely freed from all worldly affections, as appeared soon after; for having finished his reading, and allayed the storm which the waves of his thoughts had stirred up in his heart, with a great sigh, he said to his friends: 'I am now in peace and repose; I heartily renounce all our hopes; I am absolutely resolved to serve God, and from this very momen set up my rest here without going any farther. If you will not imitate me in my resolution, at least endeavor not to withdraw me from it.' The other answered, that he would not leave him, and that he should not find any difficulty in keeping him company, since so great a recompense was proposed to him; **thus** both of them began without sparing any thing, to raise

that spiritual building of which the gospel speaks. And what is no less worthy of admiration is, that they were both promised, and that those to whom they were betrothed, understanding this change, consecrated their virginity to God."

This is what St. Augustin relates, (*Conf. b. viii. c. 6.*) and this example wrought so powerfully on his soul, that turning instantly to one of his friends, he said to him with a loud voice: "What is it we suffer? What have we so lately heard? The unlearned come and carry heaven by force, and we with all our learning, remain buried in flesh and blood." The saint adds, that sensibly touched with this thought, he went into a garden, where he lay down on the ground under a fig-tree, and that giving liberty to his tears, in the trouble and agitation to which his heart was reduced, he uttered these words: "How long, O Lord, how long wilt thou be angry? Shall thy just indignation never cease? Forget, I beseech thee, my past iniquities." (*B. viii. c. 12.*) And immediately he began anew this discourse: "How long, how long? To-morrow, and to-morrow? And why shall not this very moment an end be put to my crimes?" Whilst in the bitterness of his heart he breathed forth these sorrowful words, he heard a voice which said to him:—"Take and read!" He immediately rose up, and took into his hand a book of the Holy Scriptures that lay near him: calling to mind what he had heard spoken of St. Anthony how that hearing by chance in the gospel these words of Jesus Christ, "Go, sell the things that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come and follow me," (*Matt. xix. 21.*) he took them as if they had been particularly addressed to himself, and thereupon resolved to leave all, and follow Jesus Christ. Animated by this example, and yet more by the voice he heard, he began to read the book, and immediately Almighty God infused so great a light into his heart, that joyfully renouncing all present things, he gave himself up wholly to God's service.

We learn by these examples, how many signal conversions have had their beginning from the reading of good books; as that of Potitianus's friends, of St. Augustin, and also that of St. Anthony, and we might add many others, as well of past ages, as of this in which we live, that began after the same manner. But this perhaps would be superfluous; for the mysteries which the christian religion reveals to men, have so much beauty to touch their hearts, that I wonder not at their producing such marvellous changes in the souls of those who consider them. The reading of pious books not only serves to awaken those whom this world holds as it were enchanted and lulled asleep, but also to preserve those whom grace has already roused, and who begin to watch over themselves. Wherefore God's word is, in the Scripture, termed bread, or food; because it nourishes and sustains souls in the spiritual life, as material bread does bodies in the corporal.

And although this sort of food has in all times been as necessary as bread for the preservation of life, yet it is much more so in this. Heretofore the pastors and priests were so careful and zealous in preaching God's word, that there was no need of any thing more for believers, who might without reading preserve themselves, and go forward in virtue; but we see at this day, that many of those to whom the cure of souls is entrusted, content themselves with administering the sacraments, and say a mass at the usual hour; and that in the greatest part of the boroughs and villages, and even in some good towns, having performed these functions, they think they have fulfilled their duty. Thus are the people deprived of an assistance which is so necessary to them; and in this necessity it is fit to supply with good books the want of knowing and zealous pastors.

Receive then this present that I make you, which in an indifferent size, and at a small charge, may supply the instructions you would otherwise want. It will serve for a sermon, to exhort you to live well; for a christian instruction, to

teach you true piety; for an examination to make a good confession; for a preparation to communicate worthily; for a book of devotion to pray by; and will, in fine, furnish you with several subjects to meditate on, which are, in a manner, all the duties that the christian philosophy comprehends: for if this work of mine is worthy of any consideration, it is because it contains many things, and treats of whatsoever concerns the obligations of christians, as well of those that are but beginners, as of those that are more advanced in virtue. I have done what I could to collect these matters together, and express them in a plain and easy style, to the end I might please even the palate of the weak, to whom I often direct my discourse. Now if the benefit that may be reaped by it, be as great as the diligence I have bestowed on it has been earnest, I shall think myself happily employed; since there is no bodily labor, how great soever it may be, which ought to enter into comparison with the spiritual good that may contribute to the salvation of souls.

A Memorial of a Christian Life.

BOOK I.

CONTAINING

A SERIOUS EXHORTATION TO DO PENANCE.

CHAPTER I.

With what punishment God threatens those who live in Sin.

OF the means God has often used to subdue the hearts of men, and render them obedient to his commands, one of the most prevalent has ever been, to set before their eyes the greatness of the pains prepared for those who obstinately disobey and break his laws. For though the hopes of the happiness promised the good, may sometimes produce the same effect, yet we are usually more sensibly touched with what afflicts than with what delights us. We are more discontented with an affront, than elated with honor; and the inconveniences of sickness are more painful to us, than the sweetness of health is pleasant; so that the esteem we have for the latter arises from the former, the evil which accompanies it making a deeper impression on our senses.

Wherefore we see, that in former ages God often applied this remedy, as we are taught by the prophets, whose writings are filled with nothing but terrors and threats. God's design, we are assured, by this way, to strike a dread into men's minds, to keep their restless spirits within the bounds of their duties, and, by this fear, to bring them under and subject them to the yoke of his law. God commands the prophet Jeremias to take a white book, and to write in it all the threats and calamities he had revealed from the time he first began to speak to him, and to read them to the people, to see whether the representation of these miseries would oblige them to change their lives, to the end God might change the resolution he had taken, to make them feel the effects of his wrath. The prophet did as he was commanded; and the Scripture observes, that at the same time this people were seized with such terror, that having lost the use of their senses, there was left them only the motion of their eyes, which they sorrowfully cast on one another; so great a change did these divine words cause in them.

It is manifest, then, that in the time of the Mosaical law, this was one of the principal means which God used with men, nor is it abolished in the law of grace. Does not St. Paul, the greatest of preachers, say, (*Rom. i.*) that as God makes known his justice in those he renders just, he in like manner causes his indignation to appear in the punishment of the wicked? When the forerunner of Jesus

Christ was sent, we know in what manner he first preached; he declared aloud, (*Luke* iii. 9, 10, 16, 17,) that "the axe is laid to the root of the tree;" that "every tree therefore that bringeth not forth good fruit shall be cut down, and cast into the fire;" that a mightier than he was already come into the world, "whose fan is in his hand; and he will purge his floor, and will gather the wheat into his barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire." The dread which the thunder of these words caused in their hearts was such, that all sorts of people of all descriptions ran to him. Even the publicans and soldiers, who ordinarily take little care of their salvation, had recourse to this holy man, asking him what they should do to be saved, and to avoid these menaces? We now declare to you the same thing on God's behalf: it is not, I confess, with the same spirit and the same holiness, with which St. John Baptist accompanied his words; but you are assured, that we speak to you the same truth, since St. John preached not any other faith, or any other gospel, but what we declare to you.

SECTION I.

You will perhaps ask me, what the pains are, with which God threatens the wicked in the Scripture. My answer is, in a few words, that what may be said, without making any long discourse, is this: that as the reward of the good is a universal good, in which is to be found whatever is good; so the punishment

of the wicked is a universal evil, containing in itself all other evils.

To understand this, you must know, that all the evils of this present life are particular evils, and consequently afflict not all our senses together. Amongst diseases, some attack the eyes, others the ears, others the heart, the stomach, the head, or some other part. Not any one of these evils extends itself generally over all our members; they have their seat only in some one of them; and yet we see what torment any one of these infirmities, though but the aching of a tooth, gives a sick man.

This is the effect ordinarily produced by sickness, which, how troublesome soever, is nevertheless supportable; but if a man should fall into so universal a distemper, that it should not leave any one of his senses, or any one of his members without its particular pain; that at the same time he should feel sharp pains in his head, in his eyes, in his stomach, in his heart, and in all the parts and joints of his body; that in this condition he should lie stretched on a bed, wasting away by little and little in his sufferings, every member having, as it were, its particular pain, what would you say of the torment he should endure? Could you imagine any thing more miserable, or more worthy of compassion? Would you not pity any creature you should see reduced to such a state? Behold here (if this matter will admit of any comparison) what, not for one night alone, but for all eternity, is suffered in hell! As the

wicked have employed all their members and all their senses to offend God, and as there is nothing in them which they have not made instrumental to sin, so it is very just that every one of these parts should receive its proper punishment. In this place the unchaste eyes shall be tormented with the horrible sight of devils; the ears, with the confusion of the cries and groans they shall there hear; the smell, with the insupportable stench of that infernal abode; the taste, with an insatiable hunger and thirst; the touch, all the members capable of that sentiment, with inexpressible fire and cold, both together; the imagination shall be tormented by the rigor of present evils; the memory, by the remembrance of past pleasures; the understanding, by the consideration of lost benefits and future miseries.

The Scripture admirably well sets forth the diversity and great number of these pains, when it says, (*Matt. viii. Luke vi., Eccl. vii., Isa. lxvi., Apoc. xviii.*) that in hell they shall suffer hunger and thirst; that there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, two-edged swords, and spirit created for revenge; that there shall be serpents, worms, scorpions, hammers, wormwood, water mingled with gall, winds and horrible tempests, and other things of that sort; all which signify the infinity and dreadful severity of the punishments inflicted in that place. In that place shall be found, also, interior and exterior darkness, environing both the body and soul, much more obscure than that of Egypt, which might be even felt

with the hand. (*Exod. x.*) In fine, there shall be a fire, not of the same nature with that in this world, which offends but slightly, and in a short time ceases; but a fire, fit for that place, which shall cause incredible torments, and neve have an end. Now if this be true, can there be any thing imagined more strange, than to see those who believe and confess these things, to live in so wilful a negligence? To what labors would not a rational man expose himself, that he might but one only day, nay but one only hour, be exempted from so many evils? And yet scarce any one thinks on the eternal miseries, scarce any one has the courage to expose himself to the least trouble, that he may escape them by pursuing virtue. This blindness is certainly so prodigious, that it is sufficient to deprive all those of their reason, that consider of it.

If, in the multitude of these pains, they could but in the least hope that they would one day come to an end, or after some time be diminished, it would be some comfort: but, on the contrary, the gate is there shut against all sorts of hope whatever. In the miseries of this world there is always a gate remaining open, where those that suffer expect some consolation. They are sometimes comforted by reason, sometimes by friends, sometimes by the knowledge that several others undergo the same calamities with them, and, in fine, by the belief that these afflictions will not last for ever. But this last of all evils is the only one without any consolation; the re-

probates see no door where they can find any safety; neither heaven, earth, the time past, present, or future, nor all other things whatever, offer them the least remedy; which way soever they turn, they find themselves to be the mark of all the arrows of God's wrath. All creatures seem to have conspired against them, and they are themselves their own most unceasing tormentors.

This is the state that these unhappy ones bewail in the prophet, saying, (*Psalms* cxiv. 3,) "the sorrows of death have compassed me; and the perils of hell have found me;" because which way soever they turn their eyes, they see only subjects of sorrow, and find nothing to comfort them. The virgins that were ready, says the gospel, entered into the palace of the bridegroom, and presently the gate was shut. The gate shut! O eternal shutting! O gate of all goodness, which shall never be opened again, who can sufficiently consider thee? As if the gospel had more clearly said, the gate is shut for ever to pardon, to mercy, to hope, to grace, to merits, and, in fine, to whatsoever good can be expected. There are only six days that manna can be gathered in; on the seventh, which is the Sabbath, it is no longer to be found; he therefore shall fast for ever, who has not made provision while it was time. "Because of the cold," says the wise man, "the sluggard would not plough; he shall beg therefore in the summer, and it shall not be given him." (*Prov.* xx. 4.) And in another place: "He that gathereth in the harvest,

is a wise son: but he that snorteth in the summer, is the son of confusion." (*Ch. x. 5.*) And in effect, can there be imagined any confusion more strange than that of the unhappy miser, who might have bought all the treasures of heaven with the least crumbs of bread which fell from his table; but having refused so small a thing to a poor beggar, is now, in punishment of his avarice, become himself so poor, that he asks, and shall for ever ask, one drop of water, without being able to obtain it! Who would not be touched with the prayer he made? "Father Abraham," says he, "have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, to cool my tongue, for I am tormented in this flame." (*Luke xvi. 24.*) Can one desire less? He durst not ask a glass of water, nor that Lazarus should put his hand into the water, not yet so much as his whole finger; he requests only, that he touch his tongue with the tip of his finger, and this is denied him.

This is to teach us, that this gate is so shut, that there is not the least hope of comfort for the wicked; and that this horrible excommunication fulminated against them, is so general, that they cannot expect so small a refreshment. On what side soever they turn their eyes, which way soever they stretch forth their hands, they will find nothing to ease them: their condition is like to that of a drowning man; sinking in the midst of the waves, and not knowing where to set his foot, he reaches forth his hands on

every side, because all he touches is but running water, which deceives and deludes him. Thus these victims doomed to the just vengeance of heaven, swallowed up in a deep ocean of miseries, shall be reduced to a continual combat and struggling against death, without finding any consolation on which they may rest.

Behold then one of the greatest torments that is suffered in this place; for if these pains had any limited time, though it should extend to a thousand, or even a hundred millions of years, this would be at least some sort of comfort, since whatever has an end affords a certain hope. But the state of the damned is not of this nature; their punishments continue with God's eternity, the continuance of their miseries equals the duration of God's glory; as long as God shall live, they shall die, nor shall they cease to be what they are, till God also ceases to be what he is. O dying life! O immortal death! how shall I name thee? Shall I call thee life or death? If thou art life, how dost thou kill? If thou art death, how canst thou endure? I will term thee neither the one nor the other, because both in the one and the other there is some good; in life there is some rest, in death there is an end, which is a great ease to our afflictions: but there being in thee neither rest nor end, what canst thou be? Thou art all that is bad both in life and death; for thou hast the torments of death, and not the end which it gives; thou hast the continuance of life, and not

the enjoyment it brings. God has stript life and death of all the good they had, and placed in thee whatever they had of evil, for the punishment of the wicked. How bitter is this composition! How loathsome and intolerable is this drink of our Lord's cup, of which all the sinners of the earth shall drink! *Psalm lxxiv.*

I could wish, then, that you would attentively consider this long duration, that you would penetrate as far as you can into this eternity, with the eyes of your understanding, and that, like the clean beast chewing the cud, (*Levit. xi. 3.*) you would ruminate on this point as much as it deserves. And to facilitate to you this meditation by an easy comparison, imagine how great the pain of a sick man is in one bad night, especially if he be tormented with any sharp distemper; see how often he turns himself in his bed, what disquiet he finds in himself, how long the time seems to him, how he counts all the hours, how slowly he thinks they pass, and with what impatience he desires the day, which is yet so little capable to cure his disease. If the labor of one night appears so painful, what will be the torments of an eternal night, which has not any morning, nor expects the least dawning of the day! O profound darkness! O eternal night, how terrible thou art! Night, cursed by the mouth of God and his saints! which desireth light, and shall never see it; which wisheth for the brightness of the morning, and shall never enjoy it! But weigh a little more,

what a horrible torment it will be to live eternally in such a night, not laid on a soft bed, as sick men are, but on a bed, or rather in a furnace, of burning flames. What body will be able to support these heats? How the very thoughts of them make me tremble! If it be an insupportable pain to hold the end of the finger on a burning coal for a short space of time, what will it be to burn both body and soul, in the midst of these flames, whose heat is so sharp and penetrating, that those of this world are in comparison of them but painted fires? Is there yet any judgment on the earth? Have men yet any reason? Do they understand what these words mean? Do they think them to be only fables and amusements, or that these things concern them not, but that they are spoken for others? A Christian can allege none of all this, since his faith assures him the contrary.

SECTION II.

To this evil, which is already so great, succeeds another not one jot less, to wit, that these pains are always alike, always in the same degree, and the same rigor, without receiving any diminution or abatement. All the heavenly bodies turn round with heaven, they never continue in the same station, they are always ascending or descending. The sea ebbs and flows, rivers increase and decrease; times and seasons, the states of all men, even of kings themselves, are in continual motion; there is no fever, how violent soever, but has its intermissions; there is no pain

sc sharp, but when it comes to the utmost extremity it abates; in fine, time, by little and little, wears away all evils; and, as it is commonly said, there is nothing sooner dried up than tears. This pain alone is always fresh, this fever has no interval, these fits have neither evening nor morning. God, in the time of the deluge, caused it to rain forty days and forty nights without ceasing, (*Gen. vii. 12.*) and the world was drowned, but he will eternally rain the darts and arrows of his wrath upon the damned, without a moment of intermission.

This is so true, that (according to the opinion of *St. Thomas*, 1. 2., q. 87., art. 9., ad. 3,) the pains which shall be suffered in hell for venial sins, shall be of as long continuance as those which shall be inflicted for mortal sins. For though venial sins merit not an infinite punishment, yet because in that place all debts are rigorously exacted, there being no remission of any, this torment shall continue always in one and the same degree, and one eternal duration. See, now, whether any state can be more intolerable than continually to suffer in the same manner, and without any alteration or change. Should a food be ever so delicate, yet if we were obliged to eat of it all our life, it would cause in us a disgust. The manna (*Exod. 16.*) which God sent to the children of Israel in the desert, was so excellent a food, that nothing could be imagined better, (*Num. xxi. 4.*) yet after the people had often eaten of it, it grew so loathsome to them, that they could no longer endure

it A straight and direct way is more tiresome than that which turns and winds; for variety, even in difficult matters, admits of some alleviation. Consider, now, if things that are pleasing cause a loathing in us, when they are frequent, what a vexation and discontent such terrible pains will give us continuing always the same. What will be the thoughts of these unhappy wretches, when they shall see themselves so forsaken and so hated by God, that he will never discharge them of the punishment of any one sin? The rage and fury they shall enter into will be so great, that they will never cease cursing and blaspheming his holy name.

SECTION III.

To these evils you may add a new pain, which incessantly consumes and devours the damned; it is the worm of conscience, of which the holy Scriptures so often speaks, saying, "Their worm shall not die, and their fire shall not be quenched." *Is.* lxvi. 24. This worm is a raging despite, which possesses those wretches, and an unfruitful repentance, which shall always torment them, by putting them in mind of the time that was given them, and of the means that were offered them to escape this miserable condition, which they unhappily neglected. With what motions of fury will not sinners be agitated, when they shall see themselves in this desolate state, without help and without hope; and shall remember how many days and years they have let unprofitably pass

away; how often they were admonished of the danger that threatened them, and how little did they regard it! Do we not read in the gospel, that "there shall be" in that place "weeping and gnashing of teeth?" *Matt. viii. 12.*

These are, brethren, some of the principal causes of the torment that is in hell; and to the end you may the better comprehend a thing which is of so great importance to you, I will set before your eyes an example, which very much represents the pain of the damned. Remember the history of Joseph, and the action he did in the time of the Egyptian famine. During seven years God sent so extraordinary an abundance of wheat, that it exceeded all measure, and equalled the very sand of the sea. *Gen. xli. 49.* The seven years of plenty being ended, the other seven, which followed them, were afflicted with so great and so universal a scarcity, that the very first year all Egypt came to Pharoah, saying, "Give us food:" the king sent them to Joseph, who required of them all the money they had, and gave them corn for a year. Having consumed their provision, they returned the next year to Joseph, and said to him, "Give us bread:" (*Gen. xlvii. 15.*) "why should we die in thy presence, having now no money?" Joseph answered them, "Bring me your cattle, and for them I will give you food:" this was done. The next year after, finding themselves in the same extremity, they had again recourse to Joseph, with these words: "We will not hide from our lord, how, that our money

is spent, and our cattle also are gone: neither art thou ignorant, that we have nothing now left but our bodies and our lands. Why therefore shall we die before thy eyes? We will be thine, both we and our lands: buy us to be the king's servants, and give us seed, lest for want of tillers the land be turned into a wilderness." Thus Joseph became master of all Egypt, by taking advantage of the people's inconsiderateness.

Let us now see the profit you may draw from this history. Imagine with me, what were the thoughts of the Egyptians, when they remembered those happy years of plenty, and considered that they had not only a favorable opportunity to provide for their future necessities, but also to enrich themselves for their whole lives. Represent to yourself their vain repentance, and with what displeasure they made themselves these reproaches: Miserable that we are, with what ease might we not only have remedied the necessity of a year, but have also procured ourselves abundance for ever, and we would not! Had we not been forewarned, our negligence might have been in some sort excusable; but our misfortune was foretold us long before it happened. We might easily judge, that he who had spoken the truth of the things that were past, would not prove a liar in those that were to come. We saw with what earnestness and care our king's officers gathered together all the corn of the province, which ought to have taken away all doubt from our minds. And after this we let ourselves be

surprised : can such neglect and inconsiderateness be any way excused ? What advantage might we not have received from the goods we might have then stored up, had we not prodigally wasted them !—What riches might we not have gotten by what we spent and squandered away unprofitably ? Where was our wit ? Where was our reason, that we could not benefit ourselves by so advantageous a conjuncture ? These complaints would, without doubt, have been very just in the mouth of these wretches : but there is as little proportion between their misfortune and that of which we speak, between their blindness and that of the greatest part of men, as there is between the shadow and the substance. The hunger they suffered lasted but seven years ; but this of hell shall be eternal :—that found a remedy, though it cost them very dear ; this shall never have any : there was a means found to redeem them with money and some land ; but this can never be redeemed or compensated. Of this punishment there can be no remission ; from this tribunal there is no appeal ; this decree is not to be revoked. After the seven years were passed, that people began to come forth from their misery ; but in this we represent to you, whoever shall have begun to suffer, shall suffer eternally, and never know what ease and rest can be.

If the sorrow and complaints of the Egyptians were, during that time, so great and so just, what shall be the affliction of these, when they shall see themselves without remedy ? when tearing themselves

and pining away with grief, they shall say, "Wretch that I am, what time and what opportunities have I suffered to pass away in vain! I saw the season in which, for one glass of cold water, I might have gained a crown of glory; when by giving something to the poor, I might have merited eternal life. What hindered me from casting my eyes upon the future? How did the present blind me? Why did I let the years pass away unprofitably, which by their abundance gave me the means of being rich? Had I lived amongst heathens, and believed that all was ended with the present life, I might have had some excuse before my Judge, and said to him, I knew not what you had reserved for me in the other life; but living among Christians, having the happiness to be of their number, knowing by faith that this hour must come, the voice of the church continually warning me of it, seeing every day so many people, who, to benefit by her advice, made use of their time; whose life was an invincible proof of what was taught us, and who hastened to make great provision of good works for this last hour; I see no excuse for me, nothing can justify my having continued deaf to so many voices, and blind to so many examples; heaven was offered to me for nothing, and there is no torment but I deserve for having so far forgotten myself. Infernal furies gnaw and tear my entrails. I have merited it. I deserve to be tormented with hunger for ever, since I would not in time provide myself with what was necessary. I deserve not to reap.

since I have not sown ; I deserve to have nothing since I stored up nothing ; let not anything now be given me of what I desire, since I heretofore refused what was so easy for me to give. I deserve eternally to send forth cries, and shed tears in vain : as long as God shall be God do I deserve that the worm of my conscience should gnaw and devour me for ever, since for a little wealth which I enjoyed, I have lost infinite treasures, when that by depriving myself of so small a matter, I might have gained so great riches." Behold, what is that worm that shall never die ! Behold in what manner it torments the damned, and makes one of their greatest punishments.

SECTION IV.

I ASSURE myself, you will not be a little terrified at so many sorts of pains, and that you will believe, there can be nothing added to those of which I have spoken ; but God's arm is strong enough to chastise his enemies yet more rigorously. These sufferings I have represented are great, but he can easily make them feel new ones ; those we have observed are common to all the damned, but there are particular ones, which every one shall suffer according to his crime, the proud shall be abased, and filled with confusion ; the covetous shall be driven to extreme poverty ; the glutton shall be tormented with perpetual thirst and raging hunger ; the unchaste shall burn in the flames which they themselves have kindled ; and all those who have employed their lives

only no invent new pleasures, shall live in continual tears. But because there is ordinarily nothing that more powerfully touches than example, I will state to you only one, to make you comprehend something of this truth. We read of a certain saint, to whom God granted the favor to see in spirit the punishment of a carnal man, who during his life had abandoned himself to all sorts of sensual pleasures. He saw, as soon as this unhappy person had expired, the devils seize upon his soul, and with great joy present it to the prince of darkness, who was sitting in a chair of fire. Seeing before him this criminal, he rose up from his seat, and said he would surrender to him that honorable place, because he had been of quality in the world, and always treated with respect. As soon as he was seated, and had, with terrible cries and groans, a thousand times cursed an honor that cost him so dear, two horrible devils presented him a cup of a most filthy and bitter drink, which they forced him to drink, saying, "It is fit you taste the wine which we drink here below, since on earth you loved delicious wines and dainty cheer." At the same time came in two other devils with two trumpets of fire, which setting to the ears of this man, they blew into them on both sides burning flames, mocking his misery with these words: "We have prepared for you this refreshment, because we knew you loved the delicacy of music." Two others followed, loaded with serpents and vipers, which throwing into his mouth, and on his breast,

they said, "Since you were enamored of the kisses and caresses of women, it is just you should now feel other caresses, and make proof of other delights."

It is thus, that in this place, for the punishment of the wicked, as the prophet speaks, "measure is opposed to measure," to the end, that by the diversity of the pains proportioned to the crimes, the order of God's justice and wisdom may appear with greater lustre. And God showed something of it in spirit to this holy man, to the end we might not be surprised, but might prevent these evils by sincere repentance. It is not that these things are materially found in hell, but God makes use of them, to let us in some manner understand the torments that are there suffered, and the sorrows that accompany the damned. There is none, not the very heathens themselves, but have had some light into this matter; for one of their poets having begun to relate some of the infernal torments, passes over the rest in silence, because of their multitude, declaring, that though he had a hundred mouths, as many tongues, and a voice of iron, yet he should not be able to recite so much as their names. *Virg. Æn. lib. 6.* It is a poet that speaks; but we may truly say, that he spoke in this place like a prophet or an evangelist.

If then these things are certain, and not to be avoided by the wicked, who is he, that looking on these things with the eyes of faith, can, without renouncing his reason, and even the sentiments of self-love, which always seeks its own good, and is

ever fearful of evil, forbear to change his life? To act otherwise, would be, indeed, to be reduced to the condition of beasts, who look no further than what is before them; it would be to have eyes and not to see. "Hear, ye deaf," says Isaias, "and you that are blind, open your eyes and see. Who is blind but my servant? and deaf, but he to whom I have sent my messengers? Who is truly without eyes, but he that has suffered himself to be sold for a slave?" *Isa. iv. 18, 19.* People of the world, who boast that they are so prudent, and see so many things, do they not see this? Do they, who have such good ears, and hear every thing, continue deaf only on this occasion? If you believe not what I say to you, you are no Christians; and if you believe it, and have not recourse to remedies, you are irrational. A philosopher has said, that there is this difference between opinion and imagination, that imagination alone is not sufficient to cause a fear, but there must be opinion to work this effect. *Arist. de Anima, l. 3. c. 3.* For the imagination alone which I may have, that a house may fall upon me, will not put me in fear, unless my thought at the same time represents that this accident will happen. The continual apprehension in which murderers live, comes only from this source; they fear, with reason, the wiles of their enemies. Now if it be true, that the apprehension of a danger is enough to strike a terror into the most resolute, how comes it, that the certainty of so many evils you have by faith, which

so far exceeds all science, does not cause you to tremble? If you see that you have so long lived wickedly, that, at least, according to present justice, you are condemned to these pains, and that there is nothing can make you reasonably presume you shall act better for the future than you have done for so many years, how can you live at rest in the midst of so evident, so terrible a danger? Or rather, how is it, that you are not in a continual fright, seeing the state you live in, the time you lose, the cruel regret you will therefore have, the shame and torments prepared for you? This is so strange a blindness, it is impossible for any one to comprehend it.

CHAPTER II.

What the Glory of the Blessed is.

To the end we may want nothing to incline our hearts to virtue, having declared to you the punishments with which God threatens the wicked, I will speak of the reward he promises the good, which consists in eternal glory, and immortal life. It is true, there is not among angels or men, any one able to explain this recompense, or this life; but to give you some glimmering, some relish of it, hear what St. Augustin says, (*Medit. c. 22, and 25.*) “O life, which God hath prepared for them that love him; that life, ~~the~~ sole principle of life; happy, secure, quiet life;

pure, chaste, beauteous, holy life; that life which fears no death, dreads no sorrow; life devoid of spot or stain, devoid of pain, corruption, anxiety or perturbation; life, full fraught with dignity and excellence; where there is no enemy to assault us; no sin to seduce us; no fear to intimidate us; but perfect love, an everlasting day, one and the same spirit in all, where God is seen face to face, and where the soul is continually feasted with the bread of life.

“Happy mansion of glory, the desires of my heart are directed to thee, thy infinite beauties constitute the delight of my soul; the more I consider thee, the more I languish with love for thee; sole object of my ardent desires, I am charmed with the sweet remembrance of thee.

“O happy life, O truly blessed, immortal, everlasting kingdom! to which no period of time shall ever succeed: where there is one never-ending day, there can be no measure of time. Where they who have been victorious in the spiritual combat, shall join in concert with the holy Angels, and sing, without ceasing, the songs of Sion.

“How happy my soul, and eternally happy, O heavenly city, should it merit to contemplate thy glory, thy beauty, thy happiness; to see thy gates, thy walls, thy streets, thy numerous buildings, thy illustrious inhabitants, and thy Almighty Sovereign enthroned in splendor and majesty, in the midst of thee! For thy walls are of precious stones, thy gates of beauteous pearl, and thy streets of the

purest gold, ever resounding with joyful *Alleluias*. Thy many mansions are founded upon hewn, square, sapphire stone, and covered in with plates of gold: into these no man can enter, who is not clean; no man can inhabit them, who is defiled.

“Sweet and beautiful are thy delights, O Jerusalem, our common mother. Thou feelest none of the trials and sufferings which we all behold and endure in this miserable life. Thou art subject to no intervals of darkness, no vicissitudes of night and day, no variety of seasons in their several courses. Thy light is not furnished by lamps or candles; in thee there is no shining moon, no glittering stars, but God of God, light of light, even the sun of justice ever shines in thee; and the white, immaculate Lamb, is thy pure, thy beauteous light; thy sun, thy splendor, and all thy felicity consist in the never-failing contemplation of this most beautiful King. This King of Kings is in the midst of thee, and all his children surround and adore him continually.

“There are the harmonious choirs of angels; there the assemblage of the heavenly citizens; there the joyful procession of all those blessed souls, who from the melancholy pilgrimage of this life, return to the never-ending joys of their heavenly country. There the choir of prophets, whom the spirit of God endowed with the knowledge of future events; there the twelve first preachers of the Christian religion, the blessed Apostles; there the victorious army of innumerable Martyrs; there the sacred assembly of

Confessors; there the true and perfect monks and religious; there the holy women, who overcame the pleasures of the world and the infirmity of their sex; there the virgins and youths, who surpassed their years by their virtues and sanctity; there the sheep and lambs, who have escaped the snares of worldly pleasures; these all rejoice in their proper mansions: and though the degree of glory in each is different, yet the joy of all is common, and shall be so for eternity.

“There charity reigns in its highest perfection, because God there is all in all; him they continually behold, and beholding continually praise and love, and love and praise without end, without labor, without cessation; this is their sole, their constant employment. How happy shall I be, how supremely, how everlastingly happy, should I, after the dissolution of this wretched body, deserve to hear the celestial and melodious hymns which are sung by the Saints, and troops of holy Angels, in praise of their eternal King! How happy myself, how exceedingly happy, should I merit to join and sing in concert with them the praises of my King, my God, and my Redeemer; to see him in his glory, as he vouchsafed to promise, when saying to his Father, ‘I will, that where I am, they also whom thou hast given me, may be with me, that they may see my glory, which thou hast given me, because thou hast loved me before the creation of the world.’ (*John* xvii. 24.) And again: ‘If any man minister to me, let him follow me: and where I am, there also shall my minister be.’ (*Ib.* xii.

26.) And in another place : ‘ He that loveth me, shall be loved of my Father : and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.’ ” (*Ib.* xiv. 21.)

Represent, therefore, now to yourselves, if you have lived in God’s fear, what a day that shall be which shall shine over your heads, when finishing the course of this life, you shall pass from death to immortality, and that in the inevitable moment, when others shall begin to tremble, you shall begin to walk joyfully, because you shall perceive the hour of your redemption to draw nigh. “ Endeavor,” said St. Jerome to the Virgin Eustochium, (*Lib. de Cust. Virg.*) “ to get out of the prison of this body, and as if you were at the door of your heavenly bridegroom, set before your eyes the reward of your labors, which is ready for you. Think what a day that will be, in which the Blessed Virgin Mary shall come to receive you, accompanied with a troop of holy virgins, and when your Lord and Spouse, attended by all his saints, shall present himself before you, saying, ‘ Come and make haste, my spouse, my fair one, my dove : for the winter is past, the rains and the storms are ceased, and the flowers begin to appear upon our land.’ ”

How great, afterwards, shall that joy be, that your soul will receive, when it shall be presented by the angels, and particularly by him that was its faithful guardian, before the throne of the most Holy Trinity, and that they shall there declare the good works you shall have done, with the crosses and labors you shall

have undergone for God's sake! St. Luke writes, that after the death of Tabitha, so famous for her alms-deeds, all the poor people and widows flocked about St. Peter, showing him the garments she had given them, and that the apostle, moved with their loss and desolate condition, prayed to God for this holy woman, and raised her again. What a content will it be to your soul, when the blessed spirits, placing you in the midst of them, shall in this assembly, before the presence of God, make an exact relation of your alms-deeds, your prayers, your fastings, the purity of your life, your meekness in injuries, your patience in labors, your temperance in the use of this life's conveniencies, all the virtues you shall have exercised, and the good works you shall have performed! What a satisfaction you shall then relish from the good you shall have done, when you shall clearly understand the price and excellence of virtue! There the faithful and obedient man shall appear victorious, as the wise man says; there virtue shall receive its reward, and the good be honored according to their merit.

Another comfort you shall then enjoy, will be to cast back your eyes upon your past navigation, and consider the tempests that have tossed you, the straits you have sailed through, the dangers you have escaped, and the pirates you have avoided; there you shall sing this song of the prophet: "If the Lord had not assisted me, I was ready to fall into hell; especially, when from that place of rest and glory

you shall see so many sins that are hourly committed in the world, so many souls that daily descend into hell, and how, among so many wretches that are miserably lost, God would save you. What a glorious sight will it be to behold the triumphs that will be daily celebrated, when new inhabitants, after they have vanquished the world, and finished their course, shall come to receive their crowns in that blessed city! What a joy will it be to see the seats filled, the walls repaired, and the buildings of that noble Jerusalem perfectly completed! With what acclamations will they be received by that celestial court, which shall see them laden with the spoil of their enemies! Nor shall men alone enjoy this glory; there shall be seen also victorious women, that shall have together triumphed over the world, and the weakness of their sex. There shall you behold innocent virgins crowned with roses and lilies, for having united martyrdom with chastity, and at the same time conquered the world and the flesh. There shall be seen young children, who shall receive the recompense of their purity, their virtues having outstript their years. There, in fine, shall friends be recovered, masters found again, kindred known, and after thousands of Alleluias, a kiss of peace be given. The shade is sweet to those who have felt the heat of the mid-day sun; a fountain is refreshing to the thirsty traveller: repose is pleasant to the laborer that has toiled all the day; but far more sweet to the saints will be the enjoyment of peace after war,

of safety after danger, and of eternal rest after temporary labors.

The war being ended, arms, as no longer necessary, are no longer in use. The children of Israel furnished themselves with proper arms to conquer the land of promise; but having once conquered it, they laid by their spears and swords, and burying the disorders of war in oblivion, every one, with the pleasure of peace, enjoyed the shade of his vine and of his fig-tree. (*Mic.* iv. 4.) There the eyes, tired with long watching, may sleep their fill; there the sentinel of whom the prophet speaks, may come down from his watch, and leave the keeping of the tower; there the blessed St. Jerome may now take his rest, who all his life watched day and night, beating his breast in prayer, and fighting courageously against all the powers of the old serpent. In this blessed country is not heard the rattling of the enemy's armor. The viper that winds itself up into a coil, lurks not there to sting us; the venomous sight of the basilisk does not there annoy us, nor the hissing of the serpent wound our tender ears; nothing is there heard but the sweet breathing of the Holy Ghost, or seen, but the glory of God. This is the country of peace and security, raised above all the elements, in which are found neither clouds nor tempests. "Glorious things are said of thee, O city of God." *Psalm* lxxxvi. 3. "Blessed," says holy Tobias, "are all they that love thee, and that rejoice in thy peace. My soul, bless thou the Lord, because the Lord our God hath

delivered Jerusalem, his city, from all her troubles. Happy shall I be if there shall remain of my seed to see the glory of Jerusalem. The gates of Jerusalem shall be built of sapphire and of emerald, and all the walls thereof round about, of precious stones. All the streets shall be paved with white and clean stones; and Alleluia shall be sung in its streets."

Tob. xiii. 18, &c.

O happy country, how art thou stored with joy! O glory, full of sweetness! who shall those be for whom God has prepared such a felicity, and whom has he chosen to enjoy thee? To desire thee seems very presumptuous, and yet without desiring thee I neither will nor can live. Children of Adam, blind men, straying sheep, if this is your sheepfold, whither do you run? Why do you suffer yourselves to lose so great a good, rather than take so little pains? If labor be requisite to obtain thee, let all the labors in the world be laid upon me; I willingly and heartily accept them. Let diseases torment me, let sorrows rain down upon me, let me be persecuted on all sides, let all creatures conspire against me, let me be the reproach of men, let the whole world plot my ruin. let my life be consumed in griefs, and my years in groans, provided that after these storms I may find rest in the day of misery, and ascending to thee, may make a part of that people which is clad with so much beauty and glory.

Go now you that are so foolishly charmed with the love of this world; go seek after honor, build

palaces; extend, if you can, the limits of your lands beyond measure; command, if you will, over kingdoms and worlds; but assure yourselves that, after all this, you shall never be so rich nor so great as the least of God's servants, who shall receive what the world cannot give, and enjoy what shall last for ever. You, with your riches and pomp, shall be buried in hell with the rich glutton, and a despised servant shall, with poor Lazarus, be carried by angels into Abraham's bosom.

CHAPTER III.

The Advantages God promises the Good in this Life.

I KNOW what the incredulous and libertines will say against what I have just now represented. They will allege that these are future goods and evils, that the heart of man is touched with present objects, and that there must be something of this nature to move them. But God has of his goodness abundantly provided for this also; and, though he has reserved the most delicate viands for the end of the banquet, knowing nevertheless his children's weakness, he would not leave them without nourishment, for fear they might faint by the way. Thus, when he said to Abraham, "Fear not, Abraham, I am thy protector, and thy reward, exceeding great," he promised him by these words two things; one present, which was

his protection and assistance in all the rencounters of this life; the other future, which was the reward of glory he reserved for him until the other. Now none can comprehend how great this first promise is, nor the vast number of benefits it includes, but those who have diligently read the Scripture, which repeats nothing so often or so earnestly as the abundance of the favors that God promises his friends in this life.

Hear what Solomon says in his proverbs on this subject; "Blessed is the man that findeth wisdom, and is rich in prudence: the purchasing thereof is better than the merchandize of silver, and her fruit than the chiefest and purest gold: she is more precious than all riches; and all the things that are desired are not to be compared with her. Length of days is in her right hand, and in her left riches and glory. Her ways are beautiful ways, and all her paths are peaceable. She is a tree of life to them that lay hold on her: and he that shall retain her is blessed. My son, let not these things depart from thy eyes; keep the law and the counsel, and there shall be life to thy soul and grace to thy mouth. Then shalt thou walk confidently in thy way, and thy foot shall not stumble. If thou sleep, thou shalt not fear; thou shalt rest, and thy sleep shall be sweet." Behold the felicity and sweetness that is found in the way of the good; but see what the Scripture teaches us concerning that of the wicked. It is the wise man again who speaks in Ecclesiasticus: "The way of sinners is made plain with stones, and in their end is

hell, and darkness, and pains." *Eccl. xxi.* Judge now, there being so wide a difference between these two ways, not only in respect of their end, but also of the steps which lead to it, whether there can be any reason to change the way of God for that of the world; and whether it would not be an exceeding folly to choose rather the going through one torment to many others, than the passing from one rest to another far greater.

But to the end you may more clearly perceive how great this rest is, and know the abundance of the benefits that precede it in this life, I conjure you attentively to consider what God himself, in the prophet *Isaias*, promises those that shall keep his law. I shall relate the true sense which all interpreters give his words: When thou shalt do the things that I command thee, then shall the dayning of the day, who is the Sun of Justice, appear over thee, to dissipate all the darkness of the errors and disquiets that encompass thee; thou shalt begin presently to enjoy a true and perfect health; the holiness of thy good works shall go before thee as a torch, and the glory of the Lord shall surround thee on every side: then shalt thou call upon the name of the Lord, and he shall hear thee; thou shalt implore his assistance, and he shall answer thee, that he is ready to grant thee whatsoever is necessary for thee: then shall the light of God's grace shine forth to comfort thee, in the midst of the darkness which the vexations and miseries of this life shall have brought upon thee;

thy darkness shall be as the noon-day, since the Lord will, through his infinite goodness, bring it to pass, that not only these miseries, but thy very falls and stumbles, shall serve as an occasion to advance thy happiness; he shall give thy soul true peace and true rest in the time of famine and scarcity; he shall give thee plenty and abundance, and thy bones shall be belivered from death and eternal flames: thou shalt be as a garden that is often watered, and as a fountain of living water that is never dry. What has long been ruinous in thee shall be rebuilt on such firm foundations that ages shall not shake it. If thou takest care to solemnize my festivals, and profanest not their holiness by unlawful sports; if thou dost not thine own will in opposition to mine, but cheerfully and exactly performest what I this day command thee, then shalt thou rejoice in the Lord, whose caresses surpass all the delights of the world: I will place thee above whatsoever is most exalted on earth — that is, in so happy a state of life that all the power of earthly felicity, and human nature, cannot come near it; and, in fine, to complete thy happiness, I will fill thee with all good things, when I shall make thee partaker of that rich inheritance I promised Jacob, thy father; that is of heavenly joy and glory; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it. *Isa. lviii. 8, &c* .

God's words are clear: himself represents the benefits he promises his servants; and though some of them are for the future, yet the greatest part of

them respects even the present time. Of this nature is the new light and heavenly brightness with which he enlightens souls; the abundance of things truly good, wherewith they are fully satisfied: their firm and assured confidence in him; the easiness with which he hears all the prayers of the just; the peace and tranquillity of their consciences; the particular protection he gives them; the beauty, and, as I may say, verdure of grace, signified by that well-watered garden of which the prophet speaks; the continual assistance of all that is useful for their salvation, meant by the fountain that never dries; those divine delights and comforts which far exceed all worldly pleasures, and that supernatural elevation of mind, the purity of which all the strength of created nature can never attain to. All these so rare effects are favors God promises his elect, works of his mercy, gifts of his grace, testimonies of his love, and blessings that show his particular providence over them. It would be of great use to treat separately on each of them; but there is so much to be said on so copious a subject, that the brevity I design does not admit it.

It is sufficient that you know that the good enjoy all these advantages in this life and the next, while the wicked are excluded from them in both; that you thence judge how great a difference there is between them, the one being so rich, and the other so poor; and that you thereby comprehend that the one are in God's favor, the other in his displeasure; the one

are his friends, the other his enemies; the one are in light, the other in darkness; the one taste the joys of angels, the other wallow in the pleasures of beasts: the one are truly free, and lords of themselves, the other are slaves of the devil and their own irregular desires; the one are always content, through the interior testimony of their conscience, and the other, except they are stark blind, are in continual disquiets, by reason of the worm that gnaws their hearts; the one remain always firm in the midst of afflictions, and the other, like chaff, are carried away by the wind; the hope of the one, like an immoveable anchor, places them in security, and the other, having nothing to support them, are exposed to all the assaults of fortune; the prayers of the one are acceptable to God, and those of the other are despised; the death of the one is sweet, calm, and precious in the eyes of God, and that of the other unquiet, troublesome, and disturbed with a thousand terrors: and, in fine, that the one, like God's true children, are in his keeping, and rest sweetly under the shadow of his providence, as under the protection of their father and their pastor; and the other, excluded from this care, and this manner of conduct, wander about like strayed sheep, without a master and without a shepherd, exposed to the mercy of the wolves, and to all the dangers and evil accidents which are but too common in the world.

Now, if all these advantages are the companions of virtue, what hinders you from embracing so great

a good, what can you say to excuse your negligence? You cannot impute to me the having asserted any thing against the truth, since I have proposed nothing but God's word, and the testimonies of holy Scripture. You cannot say these benefits are but small, since we have shown they exceed all that man's heart can desire. You cannot pretend to be so much an enemy to yourself as to say you will have none of them, since man so naturally loves himself, that his will has always good for its object, it being the mark at which all his desires aim. To allege that you neither comprehend them, nor taste them, will not exempt you from guilt, since, though you have no sense of them, yet you believe them through faith; for indeed the sense of them may be lost by sin, but not the faith. Now faith is a more certain, more secure, and more unquestionable proof than all other testimonies and experiences in the world. You ought, then, with this testimony to contradict all others, and give more credit to faith, than to your own senses and judgment. And if you had but once made a strong resolution to cast yourself before the throne of God's mercy, you would soon find the effects of which these prophecies speak, accomplished in you; you would know how to set a value on the excellency of these divine treasures; you would see how blind the lovers of this world are, that they seek not after such advantageous favors; and you would discern with how much reason our Saviour invited you to embrace this life, when he

said, "Come to me, all you that labor, and are burdened, and I will refresh you. Take up my yoke upon you, and learn of me, because I am meek, and humble of heart: and you shall find rest to your souls. For my yoke is sweet, and my burden light.' *Matt.* xi. 28, 29, 30. God is no deceiver; he makes no false promises, nor does he enhance their value. Why, then, do you fly? Why do you renounce quietness and peace? Why do you slight the voice of your pastor? How come you to abandon virtue, having such a promise, signed, as I may say by God's own hand? The queen of Saba heard far less things of the wisdom of Solomon, and she came from the ends of the earth, to be assured of what she had heard; and will you be so little careful of yourself, that being informed such wonderful things of virtue, you will not hazard a little pains to know, at least, whether they are true? Trust, then, in God and his holy word; boldly deliver yourselves up to him; get rid of those trifles that hinder you; and you will soon know that the merit and worth of virtue far exceed the praises that are given her, and that all we can say of her is nothing in comparison to what she is in reality.

CHAPTER IV.

That a man never ought to delay his Conversion, having so many Debts to discharge, incurred by the faults of his past Life.

IF on the one side, the reasons that oblige us to change our life are so important and so numerous; and on the other, nothing can excuse us from making this change, tell me what time you expect for the applying yourself to so necessary a work? Cast your eyes on your past life, and at what age soever you are, know, that it is time that you begin to discharge your conscience of your old debts. Consider that you are Christians, that you are regenerated by the sacred waters of baptism, that you have God for your Father, ever since the church became your mother in this divine sacrament; that you have been nourished with the milk of the gospel, the doctrine of the apostles, and, what is incomparably more holy, with the very bread of angels in the most august sacrament of the altar; and that, with all these advantages and graces, you have lived as licentiously as if you had been mere Pagans, having no knowledge of the true God. What sin have you not committed? Where is the forbidden tree on which you have not cast your eyes? What green meadow has been excepted, at least from your desires and irregular concupiscences? (*Wisd.* ii.) There has not any object been presented before

you, but has rendered your looks criminal; there has been no sensual desire in you, which you have not endeavored to entertain, though you knew you had a God, and were Christians. What could you have done more had you been without any faith at all, had you expected no other life, had you feared no future judgment? Consider that your life has been a continual train of sins, a heap of vices, a way of precipices, and an inexcusable disobedience to God's will. You have till this time had commerce only with your passions; the flesh, vain honor, the world, have hitherto been your gods: they have been the the idols you have served, and whose laws you have studied, thinking no more on God, and the obedience you owe him, than if he did not exist. I say nothing to you but the truth, there being but too great a number of Christians who, firmly believing that there is a God, sin with as much ease as if they certainly knew there were none; and being fully persuaded of the truth, do the same actions as if they were assured it were a lie. Certainly, brethren, you cannot do a greater injury to Almighty God, you can no way more sensibly affront his divine Majesty nor more clearly manifest the excess of your blindness, than by believing all that the Christian religion teaches, and living as if it were but a fable, or a mere invention.

This is a point that deserves to be duly considered, and if the multitude of your sins, and the ease with which you have committed them, do not terrify you,

yet at least the greatness of him you have offended should make some impression on you. Lift up your eyes, and behold the infinite majesty of that Lord, whom all the powers of heaven adore, before whom the whole world prostrates itself, in whose presence all created things are but like the chaff that is driven away by the wind; and then consider how great a crime it is for such worms of the earth as we, to have been so audacious as to offend him, and with so much insolence provoke the indignation of the world's Creator, and sovereign Lord of all things.

Nothing displeases God so much as sin, and of this we have many very evident proofs, by the severe chastisements with which his justice has punished it, not only in particular persons, but also in great cities, in provinces, in kingdoms, in nations, and finally, in the whole world. His just wrath extended itself not only over the earth; heaven was not exempt from it; nor was it executed only on sinners and strangers, but on the innocence of his own Son, who undertook to satisfy for them. "And if these things be done in the green wood," and for others' sins, "what shall be done in the dry," (*Luke* xxiii. 31.) which is found laden with its own offences? And can there be imagined any greater folly than for weak and miserable man to presume to mock God, whose hand is so powerful, that it can in one instant thrust him for ever into hell?

On the other side, consider God's extreme patience, with which he has all along, from the very first time

of your offending him, waited for your repentance, and assure yourself, that if, after so many years of goodness as he has made use of to bring you to do penance, you still abuse his mercy, and so little fear his anger, "except you will be converted, he will brandish his sword: he hath bent his bow, and made it ready And in it he hath prepared the instruments of death; he hath made ready his arrows, for them that burn." *Ps. vii. 13, 14.*

Consider besides the depth of his judgments, of which we read, and daily see such wonderful effects. We see Solomon, after he had received such great wisdom—after he had uttered three thousands proverbs—after he had been enlightened with the knowledge of the most abstruse mysteries, so far at last forsaken as to prostrate himself before false gods. We see one of the first seven deacons appointed in the church, after so many graces, and after receiving of Holy Ghost, become not only a heretic, but the chief of heresiarchs. We see every moment so many glittering stars fall miserably from heaven, pleased with wallowing in the mire, and reduced to the food of swine, instead of the bread of angels, with which they were fed at their father's table. Now, if the just, after so many years' service, for some concealed ingratitude, are thus abandoned by God, what must they expect who have all their life scarcely done any thing but multiply their offences?

Can then any thing more reasonably be proposed to all those that are engaged in this manner of life,

than to leave it off? Can any thing be more just, than to exhort them no longer to add sin to sin, and debt to debt, but to begin at length to serve God; and ease their souls of so heavy a burden? Have they not given enough to the flesh, to the world, and the devil? Is it not fit, that after so long a delay, they should give something of what is left them, to Him who gave them all? In fine, is it not time, after so many injuries, to fear the divine justice, which is so much the severer against the wicked, as it has suffered them with greater patience? Ought any thing so justly be feared, as the continuing so long in sin, and God's displeasure? as the having so powerful an adversary, and making him, instead of a merciful Father, a judge and an enemy? Ought any thing more to be apprehended, than the force of ill custom, which changes into nature, and makes almost a necessity of vice? And finally, is there any thing so formidable, as the letting one's self go by little and little, to so dangerous a precipice as a reprobate sense, into which when a man is once fallen, he no longer cares for any thing? The patriarch Jacob said to his father-in-law Laban, "Fourteen years have I served thee, and taken care of thy goods: it is reasonable therefore that I should now provide also for my own house." (*Gen. xxx.*) Thus is it not fit, that after so many years as you have employed in the service of this world, you should begin to think on your soul, and provide for that which is to come? There is nothing so short, or so frail, as

man's life: why then do you labor with so much earnestness to store up for a thing of so short a continuance, and never think of making any reserve for a life that shall last for ever?

CHAPTER V.

Conclusion.

IF the things we hitherto represented are so certain that they cannot be doubted of, I conjure you now, brethren, by the precious blood of Jesus Christ, to remember yourselves, to consider that you are Christians, and to hold truly all that faith teaches you. She teaches you, that you have above you a Judge, who watches over all your actions, before whom all the moments of your life are present, and that there will come a day, when he will ask you an account of them, even of an idle word. She teaches you, that man ends not with death, but that after this transitory life there remains another, which lasts for ever. She teaches you, that the souls die not with the bodies; but that the body remaining in the grave, the soul enters into a new world, where she shall have entertainment and company suitable to the life she has led in this. She teaches you, that rewards of virtue and punishments of vice are so great, that though the whole world were full of books, and all creatures employed to write, yet would the world

want writers and books, before what each of these two things comprehends could be fully explained. And, in fine, she teaches you, that you are so much indebted to God, and his gifts are so great, that though man had as many lives as there are sands in the sea, they would be all but little to be employed in his service.

Since then we have such powerful motives to incline us to virtue, whence comes it, that there are found so few who love and follow it? If men are guided by interest, what greater interest can there be than an eternal life? If they fear punishment, what torment can be greater than that which lasts for ever? If favors and obligations win the heart, what obligations can equal those we have to God, as well in respect of what he is, as in consideration of what we have received from his bounty? If we are touched with the fear of dangers, what is more to be apprehended than death, the hour whereof is so uncertain, and which engages us to so exact an account? If peace, liberty, repose of mind, and a pleasant life, are things which every one desires, it is clear they are far better found in the life which is governed by the rules of virtue, than in that which is guided only by fancy and passion, since man is a reasonable creature, and by reason differs from beasts. And, in fine, if all this seems but little to oblige you to have the esteem you ought for so important a matter, is it not enough to know that God came down from heaven, and was made man for this purpose; and that hav-

ing completed the creation of the whole world in seven days, he bestowed three and thirty years on this work, and even laid down his own life to bring it to perfection? God died to make sin die, and yet you will make this monster live, which God by his own death would make to die. What can I say more? We have but too many reasons, if we will make use of them, in treating on this subject. I no longer bid you behold a God fastened to a cross; it is sufficient to look on his creatures: which way soever you turn your eyes, you will find all things calling you, and inviting you to this excellent good; since there is no creature but speaks to us, and teaches us that we ought to love and serve God. Thus, whatsoever things there are in the world, they are all so many preachers, so many voices, and so many reasons, which call us to God.

Is it then possible, that all these voices, all these promises, and all these threats, are not forcible enough to bring us to him? Could God do more than he has done? Could he promise any thing greater? Could he threaten us with any thing more terrible, to win us, and withdraw us from sin? And yet such is the presumption of men that believe these truths, or rather such is the charm wherewith they are bewitched, that they fear not to continue all their life in sin, to lie down in sin, to rise up in sin, and to abandon themselves to all sorts of crimes, with as little scruple and apprehension, with as much rest in their sleep, and as much satisfaction at their

meals, as if all they believe were but dreams, and the gospel told them nothing but fables. Rebellious souls, obstinate spirits, hardened hearts, firebrands prepared to burn in flames for ever, what could you do more, if all that you believed passe^d with you for lies? The fear of the world makes you moderate your desires, and that of God has no operation on you. It hinders you not from gratifying your lusts, from taking revenge on all that displeases you, and executing, if it be in your power, whatever your passions inspire to you. Blind and senseless as you are, feel you not, amidst the assurance in which you live, some remorse of conscience? Are reason and judgment quite extinct in you? Is it possible, that so great, so certain, and so real dangers terrify you not at all? If a dish of meat were set before you, and some one, whom you even suspect to be a liar, should acquaint you that there was poison in it, would you dare to touch it, how delicious and inviting soever it might be, and how uncertain or unlikely soever the information that was given you might appear? The prophets, the apostles, the evangelists, God himself, cry out aloud and say to you — Miserable men, death is in that dish, death is in that delicious morsel, which the devil sets before you, and you are so besotted, as to let your own hands give you your death, by eating what destroys you. Reason and judgment have no longer any place in you; their light is extinct, their very snuff is quite put out, since they are not able to put a stop to the least of your vices. Madmen,

enchanted by the artifices of your enemy, condemned for ever to interior and exterior darkness, to pass from the one to the other; blind men, who see not your misery, who are insensible of your unhappiness, and who being harder than the adamant, are not mollified by the divine words; how wretched you are! how fit you are to be lamented with those very tears with which our Saviour bewailed your loss, when he said, "If thou also hadst known, and that in this thy day, the things that are to thy peace; but now they are hidden from thy eyes!" (*Luke xix. 42.*) How unfortunate was the day of your birth, how deplorable will be that of your death, since it shall see your last condemnation! It had been better for you never to have received life, than to be lost for ever; it had been better for you never to have been baptized, never to have received any light of faith, than to have rendered your condemnation more terrible, by having misused these graces. For if the philosophers, as the apostle says, (*Rom. i. 20, 21,*) were inexcusable, because, having reason enough to know God, they glorified him not as they ought; those shall, without doubt, be far more culpable, who, after the inestimable grace of baptism, after the gift of faith, and after having every year received their God in the eucharist, have done nothing more than these philosophers.

What then can we conclude from this discourse, but that there is no other prudence, no other wisdom, no other counsel to be taken in this world, than to

renounce the hurry and tumult of this life, and betake ourselves to the only and true way that leads us to an assured peace, and a life that never ends? This, reason commands us: to this, prudence, faith, heaven, earth, hell, life, death, God's justice and mercy call us; and to this, does the Holy Ghost, by the mouth of Ecclesiasticus, particularly invite us: "My son," says he, "from thy youth up receive instruction, and even to thy grey hairs thou shalt find wisdom. Come to her as one that plougheth and soweth, and wait for her good fruits: for in working about her thou shalt labor a little, and shall quickly eat of her fruits." *Eccles. vi. 18, 19, 20.* "Give ear, my son, and take wise counsel, and cast not away my advice. Put thy feet into her fetters, and thy neck into her chains; bow down thy shoulder, and bear her, and be not grieved with her bands. Come to her with all thy mind, and keep her ways with all thy power; search for her, and she shall be made known to thee, and when thou hast gotten her, let her not go. For in the latter end thou shalt find rest in her, and she shall be turned to thy joy. Then shall her fetters be a strong defence for thee, and a firm foundation, and her chain a robe of glory." *Eccles. vi. 24, &c.*

These words of the wise man concern you, and the Holy Ghost dictated them only to let us understand in an excellent manner, how great the beauty, the delights, and riches of true wisdom are, which is nothing else but virtue, and that delightful know-

ledge of God, of which we treat. But if your heart is not yet won by so many benefits, lift up your eyes on high, and mind no longer the fleeting waters of this world; but turn your face towards your Master, whom you behold dying on the cross, and satisfying for your sins. If you consider the posture in which he is, you will see that he has his feet fastened with nails, to wait for you, his arms stretched out to receive you, and his head bowing down to give you, as to the prodigal son, a kiss of peace. From thence (if you will hear him) he calls, with as many voices as there are open wounds on his body. Give ear to him, listen to his cries, and believe, that if his prayer is not heard, who hearkened not to the poor man's complaint, much more ought yours to be rejected, if you continue deaf to the voice of God.

Now, if at last this powerful voice has touched you, if you are firmly resolved to change your life, and betake yourself to true penance, the following Book will show you how this is to be done.

END OF THE FIRST BOOK.

A Memorial of a Christian Life.

BOOK II.

OF PENANCE AND CONFESSION.

INTRODUCTION.

OF all the evils that at this day reign in the world, there is none more deplorable than the manner many Christians use in confessing their sins, at such time as the Church commands it; for except a small number that live in the fear of God, and take some care of their souls, the rest bring not any preparation to this divine sacrament, never scrupling to come unto it, without giving themselves the least trouble to examine their consciences. Thence it happens, that they have no sooner ended their confession, and been partakers of the holy communion, but they again resume their former course, and the week appointed them for their penance is scarce ended, when they plunge themselves afresh in the mire, out of which it was endeavored to draw them, and return like dogs to their vomit.

As this disorder cannot be committed without becoming guilty of the highest contempt against God and his Church his ministers and sacrament; and as

it is indeed a mocking of his goodness, to ask him once a year pardon for the injuries we have done him, to protest to him that we will amend, and presently after fall to committing of greater offences; so it usually happens, that the divine Majesty, justly provoked against such insolent prevaricators, exercises on them, not only the most dreadful of all punishments, but also the most just, and the most suitable to their fault. He leaves them entirely to themselves, he suffers them thus to make a mockery of things the most holy, even to the end of their lives; and when they are surprised by death, they are found like those who, till that time, never had done true penance: that is, their end, as the apostle speaks, is "according to their works." 2 *Cor.* xi. 15. "They have not returned unto me with their whole heart, but with falsehood," says our Lord, by the prophet. *Jer.* iii. 10. "They have used lying and hypocrisy, and I will deal with them," says the Lord, "as with the deceivers and hypocrites." With good reason does he give the name of lying to all false and outside penance, ordinarily done by worldly people, for indeed there is nothing more false: they think to deceive God, and in the meantime they deceive themselves; they flatter themselves, and esteem themselves penitents, because they have done something exteriorly, which resembles penance, but which is altogether unprofitable and unfruitful.

Let them then take care to dispose themselves to true penance; and if any one makes this noble

resolution, and desires to be truly penitent, I will, in a few words, declare to him what it is he must do. I will for this purpose set before you the most common advices given by the fathers: I call them common, because they are very clear to those that have any knowledge of theology; but since they are unknown, and not understood by the simple, for whose salvation we have principally undertaken this work, we shall treat of them clearly and in order. This sacrament consists of three principal parts; Contrition, Confession, and Satisfaction; and because it is of the greatest importance for these three things to be perfect, discoursing of each of them separately and in particular we shall succinctly show you what true penance is.

CHAPTER 1.

Of the first part of Penance, which is Contrition, and the means to obtain it.

HE, then, that unfeignedly desires to be converted; he that, well instructed in the vanity of the world, and the obligation he has to serve God, resolves, like the prodigal child, to return to his father's house: he, I say, must know, that Contrition is the first and principal gate by which he is to enter into it; and that this is one of the most valuable and most agreeable sacrifices that can be offered to Almighty

God; which made the prophet say, "A sacrifice to God is an afflicted spirit: a contrite and humble heart, O God, thou wilt not despise." *Ps. l. 19.*

Now in this contrition there are two principal parts: the one is a horror of past sins; the other, a resolution of future amendment. This we say, because contrition, to speak properly, is an aversion to, and a hatred of sin, inasmuch as God is offended by it; and consequently, he that truly hates sin, equally detests the sins he has committed, and those he may commit, because the one and the other are equally displeasing to God. There is, notwithstanding, this difference, that as to past offences, since they cannot now be recalled, it is sufficient to look back upon them with sorrow; but as for those to come, which depend on the will, there must be a firm resolution never to commit them. Thus it is clearly seen, as St. Augustin teaches in his book of the Remedy of Penance, that it is not sufficient for the appeasing the wrath of God, that men change their lives and renounce their past sins; but they are obliged also, for the satisfying God's honor, whom they have insulted, to have recourse to the remedies that accompany penance; they must be truly sorrowful, they must offer in sacrifice a contrite and humble heart, and efface their crimes, by works of mercy.

According to this, the first thing a true penitent ought to endeavor is, to have a great sorrow for his offences, entering into the sentiments of that holy penitent, who said, "I will call to mind before thee,

O Lord, all the years of my life, in the bitterness of my soul." And this sorrow ought not principally to proceed from the sinner's having, by his crimes, deserved hell and forfeited heaven, with all the benefits that are lost by sinning; (though this kind of sorrow is good, when it hath God for its object, whom we have offended;) for since God deserves to be loved and esteemed above all things, reason wills, that we be far more afflicted for losing and offending him, than for anything else whatsoever. The greater the sin, the greater the sorrow should be; yet the mercy of God is such, and the desire he has to save us so great, that though the sorrow be not altogether such as I have described, yet the virtue of the sacrament of penance, which gives grace to him who puts no impediment to the receiving it, being joined unto it, will suffice for the obtaining remission of the sin. This is what divines commonly say; that the sacraments of the law of grace render a man contrite, who had been only attrite; and as a candle that is newly put out, and has not totally evaporated, is easily lighted; so the soul which yields some fervor by the virtue of attrition, though it yet burns not, is easily inflamed, and revives by the power of the sacrament. But to know what the attrition is that suffices to produce this effect, is not, brethren, given to men; God only knows it, from whom nothing is hid.

You shall observe also, for the comfort of the weak, that it is not always necessary for the sorrow

of which we speak, to be of the nature of those that are termed sensible, because they are in the sensitive part of the soul, and produced exteriorly by tears. One may, without this, be truly sorrowful, and truly penitent, as when our will detests sin above all things, how odious soever, which often happens without the shedding of tears, or feeling this kind of sorrow.

We shall hereafter explain how the grief necessary to make one truly penitent may be acquired, and by what means the possession of so great a good may be attained. In the meantime I shall tell you, that the second thing, and the most important to the having this contrition, is to form in one's self a firm resolution never to offend God by any mortal sin; this resolution, as well as the regret for sins committed, must not have for its principal motive either heaven or hell, or any other interest that respects ourselves, but the love of God alone: and the sinner ought in this point to resemble a virtuous wife, whose heart is firmly resolved rather to lose her life than violate the faith she has promised her husband, and who is not thus resolute in preserving her loyalty to him, so much for fear or interest, as for the love she bears him. This is the disposition I desire in you, though to fear the pains of hell, or to wish for heaven with its recompences, is not an evil thing, but profitable and commendable, as being a gift of God.

Moreover, as the penitent is obliged to have a firm resolution to avoid sin for the future, so he must

forsake the sins to which he is yet subject, if they are mortal ; otherwise his confession will no longer be a confession, but a sacrilege, and an abuse of the sacrament. He that confesses, and he that absolves him in this condition, would be equally guilty ; and so this confession, instead of blotting out sins, would serve only to add another more grievous. Beware of falling into this misfortune ; take heed of making a poison of a medicine, or a condemnation of what God has instituted for your remedy, and the only means to recover out of mortal sin ; consequently, if a man has any hatred in his soul against his neighbor, or if this hatred has passed so far as to become an enmity, he must, before all things, put off this ill-will, be reconciled to him, and restore his reputation, if he has endeavored to deprive him of it, especially if there might happen any dangerous scandal by not doing it ; in which the advice of his confessor is to be followed. This is what often happens, and this conduct is wholly necessary, when there is found any one who refuses his brother the pardon he asks of him in the court (as it is termed) of conscience ; for by this hardness he scandalizes his brother, and stirs up afresh his hatred against himself.

It is the same with the restitution of another's goods, which must be immediately restored to the person to whom they belong : I say immediately, because this restitution must not be delayed when it can be done ; nor is it sufficient for you to have an intention of restoring hereafter, or by your last will,

if you can out of hand acquit yourself of this obligation, though it be by inconveniencing yourself, especially if he whose goods you detain is himself in the same or such like condition. There are many things to be said touching the necessity of immediate restitution, and there are many false pretences, with which such as are unwilling to restore, flatter and deceive themselves: those that desire to be secure in conscience, will take advice of their spiritual directors, who will shew them, that not only he who has taken another man's goods, or done him any damage, is bound to restore the one, and repair the other; but he also that has been the occasion of it; he that has either counselled it or consented to it; he that has received the same into his house as such; he that has bought any thing of a suspected person; he that has hidden or concealed such in his house; and, in fine, he that has not hindered the evil, if it was in his power to do it. All these, and every one of them in particular, are bound entirely to make good the damage that has been caused by any of these ways; and any of them having satisfied it, all the rest are obliged to reimburse him who has paid for them all.

As there is a sort of restitution that regards goods unjustly detained, so there are two others that respect reputation and honor. The first is, if we have published some important and secret fault of our neighbor; and the second, if we have done him any injury by word or deed. In the first place we are

obliged, if it may be advantageous to him, to restore the good opinion that might be had of him, and to repair the estimation and lustre of his reputation, which we had endeavored to tarnish; and for the second, it is absolutely necessary to satisfy the person we have offended, either by asking him pardon, or doing him some other service that may equal the injury he has suffered, or by both, according to the advice of our confessor. Thus you see three different restitutions we are bound to; to wit, of goods, of reputation, and of honor; on which none can be too exact in examining himself, for the discharge of his conscience.

Another point, which is of very great importance, and without which there cannot be any true and solid penance, is the avoiding of dangerous occasions. Thus those that have any dishonest commerce, that are engaged in any evil design, or in any unlawful affection, are obliged to shun these occasions, if they will receive the grace of the sacrament.

Nor is it enough that your heart is removed from sin, unless you remove also the occasion of sinning; for otherwise you cannot possibly avoid it. It is a dangerous error into which many persons fall, who, pure as they believe their intention, imagine all to be safe, not perceiving that the seed of the evil is in them, which will never fail to spring forth in its time. St. Bernard saw very clearly into this misfortune, when he said, "You converse daily with a woman, and do you pretend to be esteemed chaste?"

Though you should be so, you cannot at least avoid the giving occasion to evil suspicions; and I tell you that by acting thus, you cause a scandal, of which you ought to take away both the cause and the matter, since it is written, ‘Wo to that man by whom the scandal cometh.’” *Matt.* xviii. 7. And the same saint, in one of his sermons on the Canticles, says another word which ought far more to frighten us: “It is, perhaps, a greater miracle for a man to dwell with a woman without losing his chastity, than to raise a dead man to life. If you cannot do what is easier, how will you have me believe, that you will do what is more difficult?”

Wherefore, you must absolutely break this commerce; you must banish all occasions of sin; especially when the veil of modesty has been once removed, and the evil taken its course; for as long as this door is open to it, it is impossible, morally speaking, but it will continue, and you be daily more irrevocably engaged in it. But if you tell me, it is difficult for you to separate from this occasion, because you must put out of your house some person to whom you have great obligations, or who is very necessary to you; I answer this weak excuse by the words of our Saviour: “If thy hand or thy foot scandalize thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee. It is better for thee to go into life maimed or lame, than having two hands or two feet, to be cast into everlasting fire.” *Matt.* xviii. 8. This remedy seems harsh; but as there are some corporal diseases which cannot

be cured but by the knife and the fire, and as a limb must be sometimes cut off to save the body; so there are some spiritual distempers which require remedies no less severe. God's law, which is very sweet and very equitable, is not to be blamed for this; the fault is yours, sinner, who have renounced all shame, who have voluntarily thrown yourself into the evil, who have taken pleasure to provoke and rouse up a wild beast in his own den, where you can neither fly, nor defend yourself. No wonder, then, that you suffer the punishment you have deserved, that you reap what you have sown, and that you undergo much toil, to drive your enemy out of your house, since you yourself opened the door to let him in.

CHAPTER II.

On the principal means to obtain Contrition, and particularly of true Sorrow for Sin

You have seen what concerns the two most essential parts of contrition; let us now see by what means they may be attained, and principally examine the first of these conditions, which is, the sorrow for having offended God.

Let him, then, who with all his heart desires to obtain this precious jewel, know, that the most efficacious of all means is, to beg it of God with a profound humility. True contrition is a particular favor, an

excellent gift of God, and a work surpassing all the powers of nature, which is infected by original sin. God created it in righteousness, and this misery turned it aside. He created it wholly just and elevated to him; but vice corrupted it, and made it turn back towards itself, that is, towards the love of visible goods, which it desires and esteems more than God. Thus, as there is no remedy in nature to recover a man born crooked and bowing towards the earth, so our will being born in this imperfection, there is none but God who is capable to reform it, and raise it up to him, by making it love him above all things: and as man cannot have this love without God's grace, so he cannot, without the particular assistance of his divine goodness, have a sorrow for sin, surpassing all things; for the one is the consequence of the other. For this cause Jesus Christ says in the gospel, "No man can come to me unless my Father draw him;" for to come to Jesus Christ is to love him above all things, and to have a sorrow for sin, exceeding all other, which none can have of himself: God only can give it.

This grace is extraordinary, and when God grants it to a sinner, it is one of the greatest favors he bestows; for though it be more to give glory than grace, it is, nevertheless, more difficult to draw a man out of sin, and place him in a state of grace, than to give him glory after grace has been given him; the distance from sin to grace being undoubtedly far greater than that from grace to glory. And St.

Thomas, 1. 2. q. 113, art. 9, speaking of God's works, affirms, that the justification of a sinner is a greater work than the creation of the world; because all the being of the world is but a finite and limited good, as all created things are; but the justification of man is a participation of God's greatness and glory, which is an infinite good.

If then this sorrow be so great a gift of God, it follows, that we must ask it of him with earnestness, imitating the woman of Canaan in her perseverance; "Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David: my daughter (that is, my soul) is grievously troubled by a devil." *Matt.* xv. 23. But if God be at the beginning severe, as he was towards the Canaanite, be not discouraged nor cease to invoke him, for he used this conduct towards that woman, only to teach us not to lose confidence, but to persevere, as she did, in prayer, even to the end. God is "faithful," says the apostle; "he cannot deny himself." 2 *Tim.* ii. 13. And to assist you in so important a matter as this of prayer, we shall hereafter set down certain prayers, that those who know not yet how to speak to God of themselves, nor to represent to him their necessities, may make known their hearts to him, and beg this grace of him.

The second means to acquire this grace is, that he who shall find himself touched by God, do choose a time and place fit for retirement, that retreating into himself, he may seriously meditate on all those things which may excite him to a sorrow for his sins. The

more attention and care he shall employ to consider the causes there are for it, the more clearly he will see the reasons that ought to incline him to bewail his misery; he will find how nature has, not without cause, ordained, that the same sense which serves a man to see, should serve him also to weep; that the one is a consequence of the other; that he who sees as he should, weeps in the same manner; and that he who knows how to behold his sins as they ought to be beheld, will know how also to lament them as they ought to be lamented. Let the sinner then open his eyes to view his faults; let him observe their multitude; then let him consider the greatness of the God he has offended; and by these two considerations he will know the just causes he has to be afflicted.

CHAPTER III.

Considerations that may help a Penitent to conceive a horror of his Sins. First, of their Multitude.

SECTION I.

To excite in your soul this lively sorrow, you must at first set before your eyes the whole course of your life, and represent to your conscience all the sins with which you have so long a time defiled it, and all the ill uses you have made of so many graces received from God; and because sin is a turning away from the sovereign good, and from the end for which man

was created, consider attentively what this end is, and you will but too clearly see how far you have departed from it. The end for which God placed man in the world was not to plant gardens, to build houses, to heap up riches, nor yet to live in delights, as the lives and actions of the most part of men seem to persuade us; but to the end he might know God, love him, keep his commandments, and by that means attain to the highest felicity, for which he was created. For this purpose he gave him a law which he is obliged to observe, grace to fulfil this law, sacraments which confer grace, doctors to teach him, and inspirations to draw him; and that which is more, he has given also himself, to be the sovereign remedy of all our evils. For the same purpose he bestowed on him the gifts of nature, which are life, health, strength, the faculties of the soul, the senses and members of the body, to the end he might employ all these things in the service of him who gave them to him; and, in fine, he plentifully furnished him with the necessaries (as they are usually called) of life, to the end he might make use of them to preserve his own life, to comfort his neighbors, and to help himself by them, as means afforded him for the meriting eternal glory.

See now whether you have satisfied the intentions of your Creator: see how you have used all these benefits, and in what manner you have acquitted yourself of all these duties. If you at first look to the end for which he created you, and at the same time consider that which you have chosen, you will

see how far you have strayed from that of God. He created you for himself, to the end you should employ your understanding, your memory, and your will for him, and that you might place in him all your love and all your hope; and you, on the contrary, forgetting these obligations, have, with an intolerable contempt, made use of all these benefits only to fix yourself to the world, and to give to the creature what is due to none but the Creator. You have loved the creature, you have adored it, you have placed your hope and your joy in it; and thus you have given to created things what belongs to their and your Lord, and have placed on the earthly goods what you ought to have placed on the heavenly. You will, by this means, know how ill you have performed the first of God's commandments, which concerns this duty; you will see in what forgetfulness of God you have lived, since you have scarce thought on him all your life long; you will perceive how ungrateful you have been for his benefits, since perhaps you have never so much as thanked him for them; you will discern the little estimation you have made of his commands, since you have so often violated them; that you have continually wanted love for him, who deserves it so much, giving still the far greatest share to worldly toys and trifles; and, in fine, you will see how you have fallen into such blindness, that you have given all your affections to the miserable worms of the earth, not having due sentiments for this so excellent Majesty.

Represent also to yourself how often you have sworn, and even in vain, by his most holy and dreadful name, having had nothing so ordinarily in your mouth to favor your obstinacy, and to confirm your lies. See in what manner you have sanctified the festivals ordained to praise God, and bewail your past offences, since you have expected these days only to augment your crimes, and please the devils. Consider what honor you have given as well to your natural parents, as to your spiritual fathers, who are your prelates and superiors, since you have slighted all their commands, and set all their laws at defiance; what love you have had for your neighbor, whom you have so often injured, and whose death you have so frequently desired for matters of no value, and some insignificant punctilio of honor. See whether you have preserved your body and soul from all impurity, since you have so many times defiled yourself by your actions, by your words, by your thoughts, by your desires, by your voluntary complacencies, and have thus so often dared to profane the temple which God had sanctified for himself. Who can here explain the uncleanness and licentiousness of your looks, the impurities you have conceived in your heart, and those your mouth has daily uttered, the excess and pomp of your clothes, your walks, your dangerous conversations, and so many artifices as you made use of to do evil? What shall I say of your covetousness and your injustice, since you have esteemed nothing so much as money, since you have made it your last

end, have adored it as your idol, and given it what is due to none but God alone? Who can express the liberty you have given to your tongue, the obscenities, the detractions, the flatteries, the lies, the curses, and the injuries, that have proceeded from it; since all your discourses, and all your ordinary conversations have been nothing else? Having in this manner traced what you have committed against God's commandments, make an exact and serious reflection on the seven deadly sins, and see with sorrow the share you have in them. Examine what has been your ambition, your presumption, your pride, and how many ways you have made it appear both in your words and in your actions. Call to mind your wrath, your envy, your intemperance, and the delicacy with which you have pampered your body: reflect on your dullness and slowness to do good, and the readiness with which you have run after all things that are evil. Consider also in what manner you have performed the spiritual and corporal works of mercy, and how little you have been concerned at your neighbor's necessities, having taken so much care to provide for your own.

And if there is no reasonable creature but ought to acknowledge in itself God's benefits, and make use of them according to his intentions, tell me to what use you have employed them? In what have you spent the life he has given you? How have you employed your wit, your strength, and the gifts of nature he has endowed you with? What have you

done with all the wealth and riches he has bestowed on you? You cannot deny but you have employed them only in vanity, and offending God; that of his own benefits you have made arms against him; that you have taken occasion to commit the greatest sins, from those very things from which you were obligated to do him the greatest services; and that what ought to have been a powerful motive to make you love God above all things, has served you only to offend him with greater ingratitude. And, in fine, you will be forced to confess, that you have lived as if you owed nothing to your God, as if you had received nothing of him, as if you had been your own creator, and had not any dependence on him. What is there then more reasonable, than that they who have eyes to behold these disorders, and understanding to comprehend how far they are strayed from the right way, should bitterly bewail their unhappiness, and that their eyes should melt in tears at the sight of so many evils? Those only are neither sensible of them, nor lament them, who are so blind as not to see the dreadful ruin, to the brink of which they have brought their souls, and the loss of all these necessary means of their salvation.

SECTION II.

Second Consideration — On what is lost by Sin.

HAVING considered the number and quality of your sins, consider also what they have made you

lose: you will thereby see how great that is which you have lost, and how often you have lost it. This motive will perhaps cause in you repentance and sorrow, which can never be advantageous to you but on this occasion. St. Chrysostom says, there is no loss reparable by tears, but that which is suffered by sin, and that they are never profitably employed but in bewailing it: make use, brethren, of this saving sorrow, and to incline your hearts the more seriously to it, consider, with all humility, what is lost by one mortal sin, and you will soon see that there is nothing which ought more sensibly to move you.

The reasons of it are these: First, by one single mortal sin is lost the grace of the Holy Ghost, which is so excellent a gift, that God bestows no greater on any mortal creature in this life: there are lost also the charity and love of God, which are always inseparable from this grace, and far more considerable than all the favors of earthly princes, which men with so much care endeavor to preserve: there are lost also infused virtues, and the gifts of the Holy Ghost, which adorn and beautify the soul in the sight of God, which arm and strengthen us against the assaults of the devil: though faith and hope are not always lost, yet there is lost the right to the inheritance of heaven, which comes by this grace since it is grace that leads to glory: there is lost the gift of spiritual adoption, which makes us the children of God, gives us the heart and mind of children towards him; and losing this advantage, we become

unworthy to be treated by him with a fatherly affection, and renounce that singular and truly paternal providence he exercises over such as he takes into the number of his children: there is lost the peace and quiet given by a good conscience: there are lost the favors and comforts of the Holy Ghost: there is lost the fruit and merit of all the good works a man has done during his whole life till this unhappy hour, and with this all the share a man can pretend to in the riches and benefits of the whole church, which are not communicated to the sinner in such a manner as when he was in the state of grace. In fine, all these treasures are lost by one mortal sin; and what a man gains by having committed it is, to see himself condemned for ever to the torments of hell; to be blotted out of the book of life; instead of God's child, to become the devil's slave; and of the temple of the most Holy Trinity, to become a den of thieves, and a retreat for serpents.

But of all these losses, the most dreadful and afflicting is the having lost Almighty God; for this loss is the root and cause of all the rest. Think on this, brethren, and know, that to lose God, is to cease having him for our father, our pastor, and our protector; and, on the contrary, of a most merciful father, to render him a declared enemy, and a most severe judge. It is this unhappiness you ought to lament with tears of blood; and it was of such a one as this that the prophet Osee said, "Rejoice not, O Israel, as the nations do; for thou hast committed

fornication against thy God.” (*Osee*, ix. 1.) The host of the tribe of Dan marching to the conquest of a city, some soldiers entered into a house, whence they took away an idol of silver: the master of the house, to whom it belonged, followed them weeping, and when these soldiers asked him the cause of his tears, he answered them, “You have taken away my gods, and do you say, what aileth thee?” (*Judges*, xviii. 24.) If this miserable man thought he had great reason to bewail the loss of his idol of metal, which was the work of his own hands, what ought a Christian to do, since he knows that every time he sins, he loses, not a false god, which himself has made, but the true God, by whom all things were made.

This great good, and this chief of all goods, being lost by one sin, judge whether it is not fit for them heartily to lament, who have lost so precious a treasure, and see themselves fallen from so many privileges, and such a height of glory, into such an abyss of misery: what sorrow, and what confusion ought not to seize a soul that has thrown itself into so many calamities! “Open your eyes, miserable soul,” says a holy Doctor, “and see what you were, and what you are; where you were, and where you are: you were the spouse of the Most High, the temple of the living God, a chosen vessel of the eternal King, the throne of the true Solomon, the seat of wisdom, the companion of angels, and an inheritrix of heaven: you had all these qualities, and as often as I say you had, you ought to mourn that you no

longer have them." Is there any thing more strong, or more opposite than this change? The spouse of God is found to be an adulteress with Satan; the temple of the Holy Ghost is become a den of thieves; the chosen vessel is changed into a vessel of corruption; the habitation of Jesus Christ, into a sty of unclean beasts; the seat of God, into a chair of pestilence; the companion of angels has made herself the fellow of devils; and she who heretofore soared aloft, even to heaven, like a dove, creeps now on earth like a serpent. Bewail yourself then, miserable soul; mourn, since the heavens mourn over you, since the church deplores you, since all the saints lament for you. St. Paul shed tears for you, because you have sinned, and not done penance; (2 *Cor.* xii. 21.) the prophets weep for you, because God's wrath is ready to break out against you; Jeremias sheds more tears for you than he did for the destruction of Jerusalem, seeing the noble city of Israel overthrown by the just wrath of heaven, and the daughter of Sion to have lost all her beauty. (*Jer* xxii. 10. and *Lament.*)

SECTION III.

Third Consideration—On the Majesty and Goodness of God, against whom we sin.

IF you pass farther, and consider the greatness and goodness of God, against whom you sin, you will find in this motive far greater cause to be afflicted

It cannot be doubted but that the greater the person offended is, the more grievous also is the offence which is done unto him; that if this person be of an infinite merit, and an infinite dignity, the offence committed against him will be also of the same nature, and consequently of an infinite greatness. Thus the farther you shall penetrate into the immensity of God, the more you will discover the malice and enormity of sin. Lift up, then, your eyes on high, and see, if you can, the exceeding Majesty of God; behold his riches, his dignity, his wisdom, his beauty, his glory, his goodness, his benignity, his power, and the obligations in which all creatures are bound to him; and you will thereby, in some sort, comprehend how great a crime it is to have offended him.

But among all the grandeurs of Almighty God, that which for the most part touches true penitents is his goodness, particularly when it is considered and meditated on. There are many things that make it known, but there is nothing in which it so visibly shows itself as in the incarnation and passion of the Son of God, and the institution of the Holy Sacrament, in which he daily offers himself for us, communicates himself to us, and makes his abode in us. Of this divine goodness, we also, often enough, perceive particular marks; we carry in ourselves pledges of it, and certain assurances in the favorable entertainments it sometimes pleases to afford the elect; it often visits them with such extraordinary favors, with so

much spiritual light and joy, that human weakness cannot support them. We find it recorded, that an ancient father of the desert, being at prayer, said, "Lord, stop a little the torrent of thy consolations;" and at another time, "Draw back from me, O Lord, for it is impossible for me to support the excess of thy sweetness." *St. John Clim. Grad.* 25. These are the effects of God's grace, the favors which the devout are wont to receive from so infinite a greatness, from so extreme a goodness, from so immense a sweetness, and from so infinite a mercy; and after all it is no wonder that this Divine Bounty, who so willingly drank for us the bitter cup of his passion, should make us taste, with so much sweetness, that of his consolations.

Has not he then who attentively considers this wonderful goodness, and at the same time remembers his having so often offended it, just reason, day and night, to bewail his offences? *St. John Climachus* relates, (*Grad.* 4 & 5,) that one of the monks, whose actions he describes, having committed a fault, asked leave of his superior to enter into the house of penitents, which they called *the Prison*, and that the superior having granted it, though with reluctance, because it was but a light offence and very pardonable. this good brother felt in his soul so sharp a sorrow for having sinned against the divine Majesty, that in eight days, his heart being mortally pierced with grief and love together, he gave up his soul to God. See, sinners, how great this sorrow must have been,

which could in a short time deprive him that felt it of his life. In this manner does the regret for sin afflict those whose eyes God opens to see the greatness of its malice; and if this holy penitent was so sensibly touched for one only sin, committed perhaps without reflecting on what he did, how great ought to be their sorrow who have employed their whole life only in sinning and multiplying their offences.

SECTION IV.

Fourth Consideration—On the Injury done to God by Sin.

BESIDES what we have already said, consider the extreme injury sin does to God, and you will see the just cause you have to grieve for it: for as often as you sin you exercise in your heart a sort of judgment, though you perceive it not; on the one side you set before you the benefit of sin, which is the pleasure you expect to receive by it; on the other, you consider the offence you commit against God, which makes you lose his friendship. Thus you put in the balance God and your pleasure; and you resolve without fear to lose rather the favor of Almighty God than this miserable pleasure.

Can any thing be imagined more horrible, or can any greater affront to the divine Majesty be invented than to prefer so base and vile a thing before him? This is to imitate the madness of the Jews, who being offered their choice of Jesus or Barabbas, answered,

they would rather have that robber than Jesus Christ. It is, as much as lies in us, to take from God the glory due to him, as to our last end, and give it to our interest and our pleasures. For to set a higher esteem on a fleeting pleasure than on God, and prefer it before him, is undoubtedly, as much as is in our power, to take the empire from the Creator, and give it to the creature; and this is so strange a case, that God commands the heavens to be amazed at it, saying by the prophet Jeremias, (*Jer. ii. 12, 13,*) “Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this, and ye gates thereof be very desolate; for my people have done two evils. They have forsaken me, the fountain of living water, and have digged to themselves cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water.”

Consider, then, how often you have done this injury to God, and tremble for fear; let your eyes become fountains, to bewail day and night so great a disorder; see against whom you have sinned; and for what you have sinned; what you have left, and what you have chosen; what you have lost, and what you have gained. Be ashamed now of yourself while it is yet time, and stay not till you are covered for ever with confusion in the dreadful day of our Lord’s judgment.

SECTION V.

Fifth Consideration—On the hatred God bears to Sin-

You will receive, also, no small assistance for the acquiring this holy sorrow, with a strong hatred

against sin, if you consider attentively that which God bears to it. This hatred is so great that none can comprehend it; and if all the created understandings were united in one, it would not be able to comprehend it; for the better a thing is, the more it loves goodness, and the more it hates wickedness. Now, since it is true that God is not only good, but infinitely good, it thence follows, that he has an infinite love for good, and an infinite hatred to evil; and thus he recompenses the one with eternal glory, and punishes the other with eternal torments, and the privation of an infinite good. It is also certain, that God hates sin as much as it deserves to be hated; that is, proportionably to the deformity which is in sin: now, since this deformity is infinite, as being against a God of infinite majesty, it follows, that the hatred God bears it is infinite.

These reasons are strong, but since examples are more sensible and feeling, to the end you may the better comprehend the quality of this hatred, I will set before your eyes some of those great punishments with which God has in this world chastised sin. The heart is known by the works; and by the penalties God has inflicted on sinners, you will conceive the aversion he has for sin. His power has formed nothing so agreeable to his eyes as that fair angel and his companions, whom he had created to praise him; but for one only sin, the highest creature became the most abominable, and that which he loved most was the first object of his wrath. Can one, without

trembling, call to mind the punishment of the first man and all his posterity? that which God laid on the whole world by the waters of the deluge? those five great towns mentioned in the holy Scripture, which he consumed by fire from heaven? the rigor of his justice and judgments, which he made appear in punishing the adultery of David? the disobedience of Saul? the indulgence of Heli towards his children? the covetousness of Ananias and Sapphira? and the pride of Nebuchodonosor? and, in fine, the greatness and eternity of hell-torments, which were created only to punish sin? But what shall we say of the pains suffered by the Son of God made man? of that rigorous chastisement which the Eternal Father inflicted even on his own Son? This example is beyond all others, and ought to cause much more fear than those we have represented, seeing the infinite dignity of the person on whom this punishment fell, for the redemption of man.

Consider them, then, every one in particular, and in all their circumstances, and be assured, you will draw from them a wonderful advantage, by the knowledge they will give you of the dreadful rigor of God's justice, and the perfect hatred he has against sin. This is the means to excite in your heart the true fear of God, and sorrow for your offences; for you should hate them, were it possible, as much as God himself abhors them. I know it is difficult for you to raise the greatness of this sorrow to the pitch it ought to be; but detest at least your crimes as

much as you can, and cease not to beg of God that he would increase your sorrow for having offended him; for in this consists the best part of true penance and Christian justice.

SECTION VI.

Sixth Consideration — On Death, and the things that follow it.

It is also very reasonable that the calling to mind the pains of hell, the universal judgment, and the judgment at the day of our death, should move us to fear and sorrow for our sins, since each of these things threatens with so great miseries those who shall be found guilty; and that they are so much nearer to us, as there is none but ought to look on the remainder of his life as very short. Think, then, seriously on it, and consider what you will do, what you will say, when this time shall come, which undoubtedly is not far off. It is then that all those who shall have lived wickedly may say with truth, O my soul, the hour is now come that must put an end to thy pride, to thy vanity, to thy follies, and to thy filthy pleasures, which thou hast loved more than God, and to which thou hast paid more obedience than to God, since thou hast so often for their sakes offended him. Pride and vanity, where are you now? Delights and pleasures, what is become of you? What have you given me, and what have you left in my hands, after so many years that I have

served you? I have preferred you before eternal life; for you I have lost heaven and gained hell; I have lost infinite benefits, and deserved to become for ever a companion of devils. What, I say, have you left me for being so faithful to you, and having, for your sakes committed so many evils? If you must, then, fall into this miserable condition; if your heart must be pierced with all those thorns, and your conscience stung with so much remorse, and perhaps in vain, why do you not now make your soul sensibly feel them, when you may do it with profit? Why do you not pronounce a just condemnation against yourselves in this life, that you may not in the next be judged by Almighty God according to the severity of his justice?

SECTION VII.

Seventh Consideration — On God's Benefits.

BUT there will be nothing more available for the increasing of this sorrow than to meditate thoroughly on the greatness and number of God's benefits; for the more you shall consider how good God has been to you, the more confusion you will receive for having been so ungrateful to him. It was by this means the prophets often endeavored to excite in God's people a sorrow for their offences; and it was by this consideration the prophet Nathan began to aggravate the heinousness of David's sin, having, before he reprehended him for his adultery, reminded him of

all the benefits and favors he had received of Almighty God.

To make use now of the same remedy, call diligently to mind whatever God's goodness has done for you. Remember that it is he who has created you, who has kept you, who has redeemed you; that by his grace you have been baptized, you have been called, you have received good inspirations, you have been preserved from many evils, and have, in fine, had a multitude of benefits bestowed on you. If you weigh these things in a just balance, you will find, that whatsoever the heavens include, and whatsoever the earth contains, are benefits proceeding from him; that all the members and senses which compose your body are so many of his gifts; that all the moments you breathe are so many favors you receive from his hand; that the bread you eat, the earth you walk on, the sun which lights you, the heavens which encompass you, and whatever serves for the entertainment of your life, are presents that he makes you; and, in fine, to comprehend all in one word, all the good in the world are his benefits, since he created all this good for you, and has preserved you from the greatest of evils, that is, dying in your sins; it being certain, that no misery is suffered by one man which another may not undergo.

Is there any thing, then, you ought to be more sensible of than your having lived in such a forgetfulness of God, who has carried you, as it were, in his arms; whose goodness has given you subsistence,

whose spirit has given you life, whose sun has warmed you, whose providence has protected you ; and finally, in whom, and by whom, you live, move, and have your being? Can there be any greater crime than to have persevered so long in offending that God, who, even during all your disorders, never ceased to do you good? or any greater blindness than the having returned for so many favors such base ingratitude?

But, moreover, can any malice go higher than the despising a God who, having clothed himself with a body, made for you so many journeys, sustained so many fasts, shed for you so many tears, offered so many prayers, suffered so many injuries, underwent so many labors, received so many affronts, and bore such insupportable sorrows? It is certain that sins brought all these miseries upon him ; that he accepted them, and would bear them, partly to satisfy for them, and partly, to show us how much he hates them, since he did so much to destroy them. Thus you see what cause you have to melt into tears, when you reflect how often, by your sins, you have afresh buffeted, scourged, and crucified your Saviour, who endured all this for you. Consider, on the one side, that invincible patience and prodigious mercy of God towards you, and on the other your ingratitude towards him ; and being plunged into a sea of sorrow, say to him the following words :

CHAPTER IV.

A Prayer, to stir up in the Soul Compunction, and Sorrow for her Sins.

O THOU only begotten Son of God, such are the benefits I have received from thee, that I want words to express them. Thou hast drawn me out of the dust and mire of the earth; thou hast of nothing created my soul, made after thy image, and capable of thy glory; thou hast given me understanding, memory, will, free choice, with all the parts of my body, and all the senses belonging to it, to the end I might make use of them to know and love thee. Thou hast borne with me even to this hour after so many sins, whereas so many others, less criminal than I, suffer now perhaps the pains of hell, because thou hast not borne them with the same patience. Not content with these mercies, thou wouldst for my sake be made man, and converse with men; for me thou wouldst feel the sharpest agony and sorrow; thou wouldst be bathed in a bloody sweat, be taken, bound, buffeted, spit upon, insulted, despised, blasphemed, and sometimes, in mockery, clothed with a red, sometimes with a white garment; for me thou wouldst be torn with whips, crowned with thorns, beaten with a reed, be condemned as a criminal, bear a cross on thy shoulders to the place of thy punishment, and be there fastened to it with nails; in this infamous place thou wouldst be set between two thieves; as if thou

hadst been one of the wicked; wouldst have for the easing of thy thirst, only vinegar and gall; and, in fine, wouldst lose thy life in that deplorable condition.

In this manner, O my Lord, and with suffering such cruel torments, didst thou vouchsafe to redeem me; and yet I, who am but a worm of the earth, a miserable sinner, have dared to give thee as many buffets, and crucify thee afresh, as many times as I have committed mortal sins; which ought to make all creatures with justice rise up against me, to revenge the injuries of their Creator.

But how can I sufficiently accuse myself of the ill use I have made of thy sacraments, these sacred remedies, which thou with thy own blood preparest for me? Thou hast washed me, and received me to be thine, in the waters of baptism; herein thou hast adopted me to be one of thy children; thou hast consecrated me as thy temple; thou hast anointed me as a king, as a priest, and as a soldier, that ought continually to fight against thy enemy. In this sacrament thou hast chosen my soul for thy spouse, and adorned it with all the ornaments befitting so high a dignity. What have I done with all this wealth thou bestowest on me, and what use have I made of all these benefits? Thou madest me thy son, and I have made myself the slave of sin; thou formedst me to be thy temple, and I have made myself an habitation for devils; thou listedst me for one of thy soldiers, and I have run over to thy enemy's side; thou espousedst my soul, on condition I should

bear thee an endless love, and I have loved vanity more than truth, and the creature more than the Creator.

It were fit, O my Lord, that finding myself guilty of so many crimes, I should have begun to lament; this is a tribute I owe thee, and which thou hast almost as long a time expected of me, as has past since thou gavest me life to incline me to it; thou hast so often called me, and so long borne with me; thou hast sometimes stirred me up to it by thy punishments, but often invited me by thy favors, and has left no means untried to draw me to thee. When thou waitedst for me, I abused thy patience; when thou calledst me, I was deaf to thy voice; thou gavest me time to do penance, and I employed it to confirm myself in my pride; thou struckest me, and I felt it not; thou afflictest me, and I made not the use I ought to do of thy chastisements: thou hast taken great pains to purify me, and, with all thy labor, even fire was not able to cleanse my filth, nor scour away the rust of my vices. I equally hardened myself against thy punishments and thy favors, showing on the one side my stubbornness, and on the other, my ingratitude. But in fine, O Lord, since thou hast done so many things for me, and commandest us never to lose confidence in thy goodness, I wholly refer myself to thy mercy, and most humbly beg of thee grace to lead a new life, that I may henceforth in such manner please and serve thee, that I may never hereafter be separated from thee. *Amen.*

CHAPTER V.

Another Prayer, to beg Pardon for our Sins.

O SOVEREIGN CREATOR of all things, when I revolve in my mind how much, by my sins, I have offended thee, I wonder at my folly, seeing that I have forsaken so good a Father; I accuse my ingratitude, and perceiving, that from so noble a liberty as I enjoyed, I am fallen into so miserable a slavery, I condemn my imprudence, and can set nothing before my eyes but hell and judgment, in the dread I have of thy justice, from which I cannot escape. But if, on the contrary, I consider thy great mercy, which according to the testimony of thy prophet, exceeds all thy works, (*Psal.* cxliv.) then does a pleasing breeze of hope come to refresh me, and bring strength and comfort to my soul; for how can I despair to obtain pardon of him who has so often, by the mouth of his prophets, invited sinners to do penance, saying, "I desire not the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way, and live." *Ezech.* xxxiii. 11. Moreover, what expressions has not thy Son used, and what comparison has he not employed, to let us see that thou art always ready to pardon those who are truly penitent? This he signified to us by that precious stone, which was lost and found again; and by the strayed sheep, that the shepherd brought home on his shoulders. *Matt.* xviii. 12, &c. But much more expressly did he set

it forth in the parable of the prodigal child, (*Luke* xv. 11, &c.) whose image I manifestly bear; for I am, in effect, that son, who with so little reason went away from a father who so tenderly loved; who have so unfortunately squandered away my estate; who, instead of submitting to thy sweet yoke, have unworthily subjected myself to the law of my passions; who am, by this means, fallen into the intolerable bondage of sin, whence there is no way for me to get out, but by him whom I have forsaken and offended.

Let thy mercy, then, O Lord, receive this wretch, who begs thy pardon, and whom thou hast with so much patience borne with, even to this hour. I am not worthy to lift up my eyes towards thee, or to call thee my Father, but thou hast goodness enough to look down upon me, because thou truly art a Father. It is this look alone that raises the dead; it is this look that causes those that are lost, to return to themselves; and I am very certain, it would have been impossible for me to have the sorrow I now feel, if thou hadst not beheld me, when I had miserably lost myself by straying from thee: thou, from the height of heaven, lookedst down upon me, and openedst my eyes, that I might see myself, and know the evils of which I was full; now thou comest before me, putting me in mind what it is to have lost innocence. I desire not thy paternal kiss, of which I am unworthy; I request not the rich garments with which I was wont to be clad, nor the ring that showed my dignity; I ask thee not to receive me as thy

child: it will be an exceeding happiness for me, if thou please to take me into the number of thy slaves, if thou brandest me with thy iron, and bindest me with thy chains, that I may no more fly from thee; it shall never grieve me to pass my life in thy house as one of the least of thy servants, provided I may never be separated from thee. Hear me, then, O Father of mercies; grant me some share in the favor of thy only Son, and make me feel the remedy of his death. Give me thy spirit to purify my heart, and strengthen it in thy love, that I may no more return into this deplorable banishment, out of which I have been recalled by thy goodness, who livest and reignest world without end. *Amen.*

Another Prayer, to beg Pardon of our Sins.

[If you desire to obtain true Contrition, and consequently the Remission of your Sins, I advise you for some days to read this Prayer with the greatest attention you can: you will see therein, how exceedingly you are obliged to Almighty God, and how great your Repentance ought to be for having offended his divine Majesty.]

Who will give water to my head, and fountains of tears to my eyes, that I may both night and day bewail my sins, and my ingratitude to Almighty God? There are many things, O my Lord, which may bring sinners to the knowledge of their sins; but I find nothing so efficacious as to consider the greatness of thy goodness, and the multitude of thy benefits, even towards sinners themselves. Wherefore, to the

end my soul may by this means accuse and confound herself, I will relate some part of thy benefits, and some part of my wickedness, that it may by this comparison more clearly appear, what thou art, and what I am; what thou hast been towards me, and what I have been towards thee.

There was a time when I was not; thou gavest me being, thou drewest me out of the dust of the earth, and madest me after thy image. "From my mother's womb thou art my God," (*Psal.* xxi. 11.) since from the beginning of my creation even to this very hour thou hast been my Father, my Saviour, my Protector, and all my good. Thou formest my body with all its senses, thou createdst my soul with all her powers, and thou hast, even to this day, preserved my life by a particular benefit of thy providence. Thou camest down from heaven to earth; thou soughtest me in the ways wherein I had lost myself; thou enablest my nature, by taking my humanity; thou deliverest me from captivity, by making thyself a prisoner; thou rescuedst me out of the power of the devil, by putting thyself into the hands of sinners; and thou destroyedst my sin, by clothing thyself with the similitude of a sinner. Thou wouldst oblige me by this grace, fill me with love by this benefit, strengthen my hope by these merits, and cause in me a horror of sin, by showing me what thou didst to destroy it. Thou threwest burning coals on the dead coals of my heart, that by the great number of favors included in this one

benefit, I might, in fine, love him who has done so much for me, and shown me so much love.

Thus, O Lord, wast thou pleased to redeem me: but what would it have availed me to be redeemed if I had not been baptized? Amongst so many infidels, of which the whole world is full, thou wast pleased to make me one of thy faithful, and put me in the number of those whose happiness is so great, as to become thy children when they are regenerated in the waters of baptism. There was I received to be thine; there was that wonderful alliance made, that thou shouldst be my God, and I should be thy servant; that thou shouldst be my Father, and I should be thy child; that as thou wouldst never cease exercising the care of a Father over me, I should also, during my whole life, pay thee the respects and obedience of a child. All this was done in baptism, not to mention the other sacraments which thou hast instituted as a remedy for my miseries, not being willing to apply any other medicine to my wounds but thine own precious blood.

In the mean time my malice has been so great, that, notwithstanding all this assistance, I have lost this first grace of innocence; and thy mercy has been so abundant, that thou hast to this very hour forborne me. O my only hope, and sole refuge, how can I without tears call to mind how often, during this so ill-employed time, death might have surprised me? and yet I was preserved! How many thousand souls are now perhaps burning in hell for less offences

than I have committed! what would have become of me, if thou hadst then taken me hence, as thou didst so many others? What judgment ought I not to have expected, if death had seized me when thy justice had found me in the very action that made me criminal! Who tied its hands at that moment? Who spoke to thee for me when I was asleep? Who stayed thy indignation, and my punishment, at such a time as I provoked the one, and deserved the other? What didst thou see in me that rendered me more considerable to thy eyes than so many other sinners, whom death took away in the midst of the sins and follies of their youth? My sins lifted up their voice against me, and thou seemedst not to hear them; my malice increased every day against thee, and thou daily prolongedst the term of thy mercy. I daily sinned, and thou daily expectedst; I fled, and thou soughtest me; I was almost wearied and tired with offending thee, and thou wast not weary of bearing with me: and as if my sins had been services, and not offences, in the midst of my greatest disorders I received from thee many good inspirations and paternal corrections, which condemned them on purpose only to make me return to my duty. How frequently didst thou call me? How often didst thou make me hear thy voice in the bottom of my heart, saying to me, "Thou hast prostituted thyself to many lovers; nevertheless return to me, and I will receive thee." *Jer. iii. 1.* Thou inducedst me with words of love, and terrifiedst me

with wholesome fears and threats, putting me in mind of the dangers of death and the rigor of thy justice. How many preachers hast thou sent to stir me up by their word? how many confessors to assist me by their counsel? How often, not only by words, but by works, hast thou pursued me, endeavoring (as a hunter who follows his game) to prevent me, sometimes by benefits, sometimes by punishments, that I might not escape from thee?

“What shall I render to the Lord, for all the things he has rendered to me?” *Psal.* cxv. 12. I owe thee all that I am, because thou alone hast created me: I am indebted to thee for all my being and life, because it is thou alone that preservest me. But what can I give thee for having given thyself for me? If I had all the lives of men and angels, and should offer them up all in sacrifice to thee, what would all this be towards the recompensing one of these drops of blood which thou hast shed for my salvation? Who will then give tears to my eyes, that I may bewail my wretchedness and blindness, which have hindered me from acknowledging so many benefits? Help me now, O Lord, and give me thy grace, to the end I may accuse myself, and “confess my injustice to thee.” *Psal.* xxxi. 5. How unhappy soever I am, I am nevertheless thy creature, made after thy image; acknowledge, O Lord, this figure, which is thine; remove not from me, and thou wilt find what thine own hand has made. I confess I have employed all my forces to offend thee, and made

use of the work of thine own hands against thee; my feet have run after iniquity, my hands have been opened to covetousness, my eyes have been gazing after nothing but vanity, and my ears always attentive to hearken after lies. That most noble part of my soul which had eyes to see, has turned them away from beholding thy beauty, and fixed them only on that fading lustre which accompanies this miserable life; that which should have been continually meditating on thy law and thy commandments, has been busied day and night in nothing else but seeking opportunities to break them. And if this has been the employment of my understanding, what is to be thought of my will? Thou offeredst it the delights of heaven; it has changed heaven for earth, and opened the heart which thou hadst consecrated for thyself to the love of creatures. This has been, O Lord, my acknowledgment of thy benefits, and this is the fruit that the senses which thou hast created have brought forth; what then can I answer, when entering into judgment with me, thou shalt say to me: "I planted thee a chosen vineyard, all true seed; how then art thou turned unto me into that which is good for nothing?" *Jer. ii. 21. Isai. v. 2.*

If thy reproaching me with what thou didst for me when thou createst me, is sufficient to strike me dumb, what shall I be able to answer when thou shalt represent to me the care thou hast taken to preserve me? Thou hast preserved, O Lord, by thy adorable providence, him who has made it his whole

study to condemn thy law, to persecute thy servants, to scandalize thy church, and to fortify the kingdom of sin against thee. Thou hast moved the tongue that blasphemed thee; thou hast governed the members that offended thee; and thou has maintained him who, at thy cost, served thy enemies. For I have not only repaid thy benefits with ingratitude, but have of those very benefits made arms to fight against thee; thou hast appointed all creatures to serve me; I have made use of them only to offend thee; I have loved the gifts more than the giver; the lustre I saw in them blinded me. I kept my eyes and mind fixed to that, whereas their beauty should have served only as a means to raise me to the knowledge of thine, and to make me comprehend how the Creator must be incomparably fairer than his creature. Thou hast given me all things necessary, that I might give myself to thee; I have appropriated them to myself, and have never rendered thee either the glory or the tribute that I ought: they have been perfectly obedient to thee, doing me all the services which thou hast prescribed them; and I, for my part, have always offended him, by whose order all things set themselves to serve me: thou gavest me health, and I employed it against thee; thou gavest me strength, and I used it for thy enemy.

What shall I yet say of another of my ingratitude? I have seen all the labors and miseries with which other men are afflicted; yet they have not been sufficient to make me understand that all these calamities

which befell others, were so many benefits to me since thou hadst the goodness to preserve me from them. Owe we not an acknowledgment to the least of men that has done us good? And art thou, O my God, only he whose favors it is lawful to forget? If benefits have heretofore tamed the fierceness of lions and serpents, how comes it that thine have not so far won my heart as to oblige me to say with the prophet: "Let us fear the Lord our God, who giveth us the early and the latter rain in due season; who preserveth for us the fulness of the yearly harvest." *Jer. v. 24.*

Thy bearing, O Lord, with such a one as I am, was sufficient to show what thou art; nor was it necessary to give me any further testimonies of thy goodness: and if thou mayest with justice require from me a strict account of these things, thou mayest with more rigor exact one from me of those, which made thee so liberally shed thy blood. I have thwarted all thy purposes, and, as much as lay in me, rendered useless all the mystery of thy incarnation. Thou madest thyself man to make me in a manner participate of thy nature; and I, through a disorderly love of mine own vileness, have ranked myself among beasts, and made myself a child of the devil; thou earnest down to earth to raise me to heaven, and as I merited not that favor, so I minded it not, taking more pleasure to continue wallowing in my filth and mire; thou didst set me at liberty, and I have of myself returned into bondage: thou gavest me life,

and I have given myself death ; thou madest me one of thy members, and I made myself a member of the devil. Neither did so many benefits suffice to make me know thee ; nor so many extraordinary marks of thy love, to make me love thee ; nor so many obligations, to make me hope in thee ; nor so rigorous a justice borne by thyself to make me fear thee. Thou humblest thyself even to the dust of the earth ; and my pride was never in the least abated ; thou stoodest naked on the cross ; and the world suffices not my covetousness : thou, who art a God, sufferedst thyself to be buffeted ; and I, who am but a worm of the earth, cannot endure so much as the hem of my garment to be touched.

But I am yet constrained, to my confusion, to observe the utmost point at which my ingratitude and malice could arrive : the mercy and love it pleased thee to exercise towards me were so exceeding, that thou wouldst die thyself to make sin die in me ; and I have presumed to offend thee on the confidence I had in this mercy. What greater impiety than this can be committed ? I have taken occasion from thy goodness to persevere in my wickedness ; the very same means thou madest use of to destroy sin has been to me a motive of sinning ; thus have I frustrated thy designs, mocked thy counsels, and made all thy bounties serve to execute the inventions of my malice : because thou art so good, I imagined that I might be wicked ; and because thou hadst already bestowed on me so many benefits, I concluded that I

might commit against thee great offences. By so detestable a conclusion I fell into this error, to behold the remedy thou ordainest against sin, as an encouragement to sin with more liberty, and to employ those arms to destroy my own life, which thou gavest me to fight against my enemies. In fine, thou wouldst die, to render thyself the Lord of the living and the dead, and to the end "that they also, who live, may not now live to themselves, but unto him who died for them, and rose again;" (2 *Cor.* v. 15,) and I, like a true child of Jezabel, have taken occasion from thy death to rob thee of thy goods; I have run away from thy service, and made myself a slave to thy enemy. What punishment does not such a crime deserve? If dogs devoured the flesh of this queen for such a sin, how comes it that my body is yet whole? 4 *Kings* ix. And if the apostle forms a strong argument to demonstrate the malice of man's heart, from its taking occasion of the law, to break the law, is it not a far greater wickedness to take occasion of grace to overthrow the same grace? *Rom.* vii. 13, &c. O Lord, I adore thy patience, in suffering thyself to be buffeted by the hands of sinners; but there is much more cause to wonder at thy bearing with me, and such other sinners as I am.

But what appearance of hope is there that this patience is not tired? I see what thou sayest in thy prophets: "I have always held my peace, I have kept silence, I have been patient; I will speak now as a woman in labor." *Isai.* xlii. 14. I know that

the earth which brings not forth fruit, after it has been watered by the rain, is cursed; and that the vineyard which, after it has been carefully cultivated, instead of good grapes, brings forth only such as are sour and wild, is destroyed and laid waste by thy command. How then, sinner, who mayest be compared to a dry and withered branch, didst thou not fear the terrible voice of that husbandman, who cuts off from the vine the fruitless sprigs, and casts them into the fire? Where was my prudence not to apprehend so formidable a judgment? Where were my ears that they heard not these words? And what dead sleep was I in that I awoke not at the thundering of these threats? I placed all my content in continuing on the earth: I loved an abode so unworthy the soul which God has given me, and I made it my delight to be among the thorns; I was burned with the fire of my passions: I was stung with the points of my desires; I was torn in pieces by the distraction of my thoughts; I felt the continual gnawings of the worm of my conscience: and in this miserable condition I foolishly thought myself at rest; I imagined that I enjoyed peace in the midst of this cruel war, and perceived not that I was a senseless fool in not knowing myself, and a rebel in departing from thy service.

What, then, O my God, will become of me? Alas! what must I do? I truly know that I deserve not to appear before thee, or to lift up my eyes to behold thee: but whither shall I go? where can I hide

myself from thee? Art not thou my father, and the Father of Mercies? Thus, though I have ceased to act as a child, thou hast not left off to treat me as a father; and though I have committed all that can contribute to my condemnation, thou hast still in thee all that is requisite for my salvation. I can then do nothing but throw myself at thy feet, and humbly beg thy mercy; I can call upon none but thee; from none but thee can I expect relief; for it is thou who hast created me, hast formed me, hast redeemed me, and hast preserved me; thou art my king, my pastor, my priest, and sacrifice; and thus, O Lord, if thou puttest me away, who will receive me? if thou forsakest me, who will protect me? Acknowledge, O Lord, this strayed sheep, which returns to thee: if I am wounded, thou canst heal me; if I am blind, thou canst give me sight; nay, were I dead, thou canst raise me again; and if I am filthy, thou canst cleanse me: "Thou shalt sprinkle me with hyssop, and I shall be cleansed: thou shalt wash me, and I shall be made whiter than snow." *Psalm. l. 9.* Thy mercy is greater than my offence, thy goodness exceeds my malice, and thou canst pardon more sins than I can commit. Look not, therefore, upon me with disdain, nor consider the multitude of my offences; but the multitude of thy mercies, who livest and reignest world without end. *Amen.*

CHAPTER VI.

Of the Wonderful Fruits that follow True Contrition.

THESE, brethren, are the considerations and prayers that may help us to obtain this so important grace of contrition: I have dwelt the longer upon them, because this part is the foundation, and, as it were, the key of all the rest that compose penance. You ought, therefore, to read these things with the greatest devotion you can; you ought to retire into a quiet and silent place, and choose a time fit for that purpose: for as it often happens that one who begins to pray without devotion finds it in praying; so it may also fall out, that as you are reading some of these prayers, or meditating on some of those considerations, I propose to you, without contrition, God may give it you in the midst of prayer. *St. Luke* (chap. 9, v. 29,) teaches us, that our Lord was transfigured whilst he was praying: thus great changes are often wrought in prayer, God many times granting at the last what he does not at the first; and, therefore, it is not without reason that the end of prayer is, ordinarily, better than the beginning.

If it happen then that the penitent, by one of these means, or any other, enters into a true contrition, the grace of the Holy Ghost is at the same time restored to him, and it may be said, that from that very moment this blessed Spirit is given him for a guest, a director, and a governor, who will, like a

wise pilot, securely steer his life through the midst of this tempestuous sea. He is then united by charity to Jesus Christ, as a living member of its head, and by this admirable union made partaker of the influence of his grace, of his merits, of his death, and of his life: he is then received and adopted for a child of God, he becomes an inhabitant of his kingdom; God treats him as a true son, making him feel all those effects of his care and providence which he usually grants them whom he raises to this illustrious quality. Then this Father, full of goodness, receives into his house this son that was lost, causing him to be clothed with a white robe, which signifies innocence, and giving him the ring of wisdom, that is, a new knowledge of heavenly things, which are hidden from the eyes of the world. *Luke xv. 22.*

Then the heavens rejoice, the angels sing praises to God, and all the celestial kingdom bless that happy day, which restores to them a banished citizen; and all creatures which were before afflicted for the offence done to God, and the loss of their fellow creature, leap for joy, and sound forth, after their manner, a song of praise, to see this loss so advantageously repaired: but above all, this good Shepherd, who has with so great pains sought his strayed sheep and brought him home on his shoulders, makes his joy appear; then he calls together all his friends and neighbors, saying to them: "Rejoice with me because I have found my sheep that was lost." *Luke xv. 6.*

You will in the meantime observe, that the great-

er the penitent's humility and contrition are, the better they prepare him also for a more eminent grace, and for the receiving greater mercies; for as the designed height of a building may be conceived by the low laying of its foundations, and as we see that a tree shoots up so much higher into the air as it takes root deeper into the earth, so when God gives men a more profound humility, and a more lively horror of their wicked life, it is a great sign that he disposes them for a more than ordinary grace.

“Justice and judgment are,” as the prophet says, “the preparation of God’s throne.” *Ps. lxxxviii. 15.* It is judgment that examines the cause, and justice that executes the sentence. The soul of the sinner exercises these functions in herself; she resents at first with confusion the evil she has committed, which was to forsake the Creator for love of the creature; and afterwards she pronounces against herself her own judgment, acknowledging it to be just, that he who dishonored God should humble himself, dishonor himself, and debase himself, even to the dust of the earth; and that he who has taken extraordinary delight in creatures, should exceedingly lament, and severely chastise himself, to do penance for his sinful pleasures. It is thus a soul renders herself the throne of God, and becomes the palace in which the Divine Wisdom is pleased to make its abode. St. Bernard says, that God makes use of fear and love, as of two feet, to enter into a soul: he first sets in that of fear, and afterwards that of love; so that the greater the

fear is which begins, the greater is the love which follows. Our Lord, according to the language of the prophet, mortifieth and quickeneth, "bringeth down to hell, and bringeth back again." 1 *Kings* ii. 6. And this is the order most frequently kept by this Sovereign Lord, who, after a soul has conceived so great a sorrow and fear for her offences, that she seems as it were already swallowed up in hell, draws her back by his mercies, and raises her up again, giving her as many comforts as she has suffered griefs and torments in her heart.

Thus, when your soul shall be troubled, when she shall be taken with these terrors, do not lose courage; but, on the contrary, know that then a strong medicine is given you, to the end you may become more healthy; that you are washed in scalding water, to the end you may be more clean; and that you are laid on burning coals, to the end you may be purified from the filth and rust you had contracted. It will then be fit for you to raise your voice to God with the prophet, saying; "Thou hast moved the earth, and hast troubled it; heal thou the breaches thereof, for it has been moved;" (*Ps.* lix. 2,) and then will you experience in yourself what the prophet adds: "The earth trembled, and was still, when God arose in judgment." *Ps.* lxxv. 9, 10.

For as soon as, being moved by God, you shall have pronounced against yourself the judgment we have mentioned, the fear of divine justice will not fail to seize your soul; but this labor will soon be succeeded

by rest, with the confidence and peace which our Lord gives those to whom he shows mercy: it is he, that by his spirit of judgment, and by his spirit of fire, washes away the stains of the daughters of Sion, and takes from the midst of them the blood which defiled them, striking a terror into the souls by the first, that is, by the fear of his justice, and afterwards comforting them by the second, that is, by confidence in his mercy. *Isai.* iv. 4. Elias heard a noise, an earthquake, and a violent whirlwind, which overthrew mountains; but this tempest was followed by a gentle wind, in which God made himself known. 3 *Kings* xix

This is the most usual manner in which God works the conversion of souls, and this is the same he observed for the sanctification of the world: he gave it first the law, and after the law, the gospel; and thus the soul ought to find in herself before all things the effect and rigor of the law; and afterwards the peace and comfort of the gospel. The property of the law is to frighten, as was signified by the terrors with which it was given on Mount Sinai; (*Exod.* xix.) but the property of the gospel is to bring comfort and courage; as it came to pass when God sent the Holy Ghost to the apostles on Mount Sion, in the day of Pentecost. "Whoever will come to this mountain must pass by the other;" that is, whoever pretends to obtain the spirit of love, must feel the spirit of fear; and whoever aspires to the comforts of the gospel, must first undergo the rigors of the

law. How happy is the soul that finds herself thus disposed. It is to her are promised all the graces and riches of the gospel, as Isaias signified, (c. lxi. v. 1, 2, 3,) when speaking in the person of our Saviour, he said thus: "The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because the Lord hath anointed me; he hath sent me to preach to the meek, to heal the contrite of heart, and to preach a release to the captives, and deliverance to them that are shut up: to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn: to appoint to the mourners of Sion, and to give them a crown for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, a garment of praise for the spirit of grief." See here how many comparisons the Holy Ghost uses, to express on one side the effects of the law and penance, and on the other, those of the gospel and grace, and how the one are promised by the other. It is then certain, that to enter into Jesus Christ's palace, and into his rich cellars, where are the delicious wines of the true Solomon, we must pass through affliction, through labor, and through penance; and that whoever proposes any other way is a deceiver. Endeavor with the spouse to get upon the mountain of myrrh, that is, of bitterness, of sorrow, and of mortification, and you shall not fail to hear afterwards the words which the wise man adds: "Thou art all fair my love, and there is not a spot in thee." *Cant.* iv. 7.

It is true, God does not always dispose in this order; but sometimes prevents with the sweetness

of his blessings those he will draw to him, lest the austerity of penance, and the strokes of despair may make them retire and shrink back: but it also ordinarily happens that, after they have been strengthened by such evident pledges of his mercy, he puts into their souls bitter regrets for their offences which are followed by this great peace, and this consolation we have spoken of. This is what God teaches by his prophet, when he says: "I will give her vinedressers out of the same place, and the valley of Achor (that is, of trouble) for an opening of hope; and she shall sing there, as she sang in the days of her youth." (*Osee* ii. 15.) This shows that when God uses these means, he begins by the sweetness of spiritual delights; that he afterwards gives the valley of Achor, that is trouble, and the bitterness of Contrition; but that in a short time succeed songs of youth, that is the joys of the soul, which pours herself forth in praises, seeing in herself the marks God gives her of his love, which are so many pledges of the marriage he will contract with her, and first fruits of his glory.

It is also of very great importance to take notice that our Lord, in raising a soul from a less degree of grace to an higher, often proceeds in the same order he kept in bringing her to change her life, and pass from sin to grace: for having a design to draw her to great things, he disposes her for this state by sighs and desires, by sorrows and fears, and fills her not with his gifts till after he has tried her in spirit and body, by many labors and pains. He will have

this rainy and stormy winter to precede both the flowers of the spring, and the fruits of the summer, (*Can. ii.*) which are the gifts and graces that he prepares for his friends; and the greater the favors are he reserves for them, the sharper also, usually, are the sorrows that go before them. Let no sinner therefore be dismayed when he sees himself in this condition; on the contrary, let him look on it as an assurance of God's goodness, and of the graces he will bestow on him.

CHAPTER VII.

On the Second Part of Penance, which is Confession, and of the seven things which are to be observed in it.

WE have explained the first part of penance, which consists in contrition of heart; let us now come to the second, which regards confession of sins. Few people confess as they ought; and to perform this duty well, when the penitent shall have done his utmost endeavor to excite in his soul a true contrition, according to the rules we have set down, he must observe what follows:

SECTION I.

On the care that is to be taken in examining our Conscience.

ADVICE I. The first thing is, that before any one presents himself to confession, he takes time to ex-

amine his conscience, and exact of his memory a faithful account of all his past sins, especially if it be long since he has been at confession. A wise doctor says: that it is to be done with all the care and diligence the most prudent men use in affairs of the greatest importance; and, in truth, I know not any more considerable, or of greater consequence.

This preparation is so necessary, that if it should be wanting, the confession would be null, unless the confessor should, by prudently interrogating the penitent, supply this default; as it would also be, if any should, on purpose, omit to confess a sin, of which he knows himself guilty: and according to the opinion of eminent doctors of the church, it is an evil equally grievous to conceal voluntarily some sin in confession, or to confess one's self so negligently as to omit some for want of due examination. This is so common a misfortune, that it were fit to be preached aloud in all public places, for the undeceiving of those who ordinarily go and throw themselves at the feet of a confessor, without any way preparing themselves by an examination of their life.

Those who come to the performance of this duty with so little respect, besides the sacrilege they commit, are as much obliged to make a new confession as if they had deliberately concealed one of their sins; their forgetfulness being so far from excusing them, that, on the contrary, it renders them more guilty, since it proceeds not from any defect of nature: but from a manifest negligence depending on the

will. For avoiding these inconveniences, it is necessary for a man to be careful in himself; and the order he ought to keep in it is, to begin the review of his soul by the consideration of the mortal offences into which he may have fallen. For this purpose it will be necessary to consider distinctly the ten Commandments of God, and seriously to reflect how often he has sinned against them, by thought, word, or action, weighing also all the circumstances that have accompanied the sin, if they are such as ought necessarily to be confessed; of which we will treat particularly hereafter.

SECTION II.

The Obligation we have to confess the Number of our Sins.

ADVICE II. In the second place, it is necessary for the penitent, when he makes his confession, to be exact in declaring the number of his sins; that is, how often he has committed such or such a sin; for if the number be not expressed, his confession will not be entire. If he cannot distinctly remember the number, let him declare it in such manner as he can best call it to mind; but if his memory cannot suggest to him any thing like a distinct comprehension of the number, and if it be a sin in which he has lived a considerable time, as in some enmity, or sin of impurity, let him then declare how long he has continued in this sin, to the end the confessor may

thence conjecture how often he may probably have offended during such a space of time: but if it be a sin that has not this continuance, but into which the penitent has several times fallen; as, if he has fore-sworn himself, spoken ill of his neighbor, or cursed him, and cannot remember how often he has thus offended, let him tell at least, whether he has been subject to commit these sorts of sins as often as occasion offered, or whether sometimes returning to himself, he resisted them; for by this means his physician, knowing the state of his disease, can better apply himself to cure him.

SECTION III.

Of Confession, and the Circumstances that ought to accompany it.

ADVICE III. It is not enough to confess the kind and number of one's sins; but their circumstances must also be expressed, when they are of such a nature as to be directly opposite to some of the commandments of Almighty God, or of his Church, or when they greatly aggravate the sin, though they do not change the kind of it: for though the act of the mortal sin be in itself but one, it may nevertheless be accompanied with such deformity or excess, that it will be absolutely necessary to declare them; as, for example, if a man should steal arms to kill another, or take away his wife, it is evident that though this be but one act, which is to rob, and that consequently

he commits but one sin, which is theft, yet this single act is infected with the poison of two more criminal; to wit, murder and adultery, which are contrary to these two of God's commandments: "Thou shalt not kill," and "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife." And these circumstances so augment the sin, that it is absolutely necessary to confess them. There are others that are not so important, and which may be omitted; as having spoken ill of others in the church, or having committed some sin on a fasting day, or a holy-day; but after all he does well to confess them, as one confesses venial sins; and because it is not so easy a matter to discern well the difference between these two sorts of circumstances, I will here set down those we are most commonly obliged to declare in confession.

First, as for what concerns sins of impurity: it is necessary to declare the circumstances of the person with whom one has sinned; the sins being different according to the different qualities of the person: for to offend God with a single person is simple fornication; with a married person it is adultery; with a kinswoman, incest; with a priest or a nun, being dedicated to God's service, sacrilege, or spiritual adultery: and such circumstances are so essential in respect of this sin, that one is bound to declare them, not only when it has been consummated by the act; but also when it has been committed only in thought and desire, since it is the same thing in the sight of God. In this sin also, and in all others, we must

take notice whether they have caused any scandal, which is likewise a necessary circumstance: and by this word scandal is understood the giving another, either by words or actions, occasion to sin; as the soliciting a woman to incontinency, or of a man to gaming, or the instigating any one to be revenged of his enemy. Thus, in sins of the flesh, besides what we have already said, it is very necessary to distinguish whether one has made use of such means as are frequent in those sorts of crimes to induce the other person to sin, or whether she willingly offered herself to it; for in the first there is scandal, which much augments the malice.

It is also to be considered, whether, when a sin was committed, it were done in such a place, or before such persons as, from the evil example that was given them, might probably take occasion to do the like; as if any one who has authority over others should eat flesh on a day of fasting or abstinence, or carelessly give himself to some other licentiousness, in the presence of those that depend on him, and will soon be ready to imitate his faults. In this case there is an indispensable obligation to confess this circumstance of scandal, and of the ill example we have given; and this is a point that ought duly to be weighed by persons of quality, whose houses are open to every one to game in; and by all fathers and mothers, whose words and actions are like laws to their children: for though too common a misfortune, the superiors taking pleasure in any thing, is sufficient to

make their inferiors look on it at least as lawful, if not also commendable. Saul, through despair, killed himself with his own hand, and his servant at the same time fell also on his own sword, believing that he did not amiss in following the example of his master. 1 *Kings* 31. It is also sometimes necessary to declare, whether one has sinned in a holy place, and particularly in three cases, which are, theft, bloodshed, and actual impurity; because this circumstance of place aggravates the offence, and makes it sacrilege, which makes the crime more heinous. In like manner, when a man has sworn, or made a vow to do or not to do something to which he is moreover obliged by an express commandment of Almighty God, as, not to swear, nor to kill, or any evil of like nature; if he shall afterwards happen to do the contrary, he is bound to declare this circumstance, to wit, his oath or vow, which makes his sin double, and ought to be doubly considered.

SECTION IV.

That it is not necessary to confess any thing that does not aggravate or change the Species of the Sin of which we accuse ourselves

ADVICE IV. The fourth advice is, that having performed what I have declared of the number and circumstances of sins, there is nothing farther necessary to be done, but to express simply the kind or name of the sin committed; as theft, enmity, adultery, or the like. Whence you may comprehend that, in

confessing your sins, there is no need of relating a history; it is enough to tell their names, and how often you have committed them, without using many words to declare how things passed. This is a rule very requisite to be observed, and if the most part of penitents understood it, they might in a short time accuse themselves of their manifold sins, by reducing them to their kinds, and saying: I have so many times stolen, committed adultery, sworn false oaths, &c. And for the better governing himself on these occasions, when a penitent intends to accuse himself of a crime that seems to require a long rehearsal, in which he will relate several circumstances that trouble his conscience and vary his sins, let him endeavor to pick them out of the body of his story, and accuse himself of them apart, and so he shall accuse himself as he ought. But after all, if he has not understanding enough to keep this method, let him accuse himself as well as he can, for God requires no more of any one than he knows, and is able to do.

You may from this advice conclude, that it is not necessary to particularise the manner and order in which the sin was committed; especially if they are things which concern impurity, but it is sufficient simply to tell the kind. I could wish I might stop here, and this matter being very loathsome, I wish I could omit speaking of it: but since we are seeking after remedies, I am constrained rather to offend the chaste ear, by declaring in particular what is necessary to be explained. The sin of impurity may then be

committed by thought, by word, by touch, or, in fine, by the deed itself. If the act has been consummated, it is sufficient to tell the name of it; as, I have so often committed incest, adultery, or simple fornication, without specifying any farther particularities, which are sufficiently understood when the kind of the sin is known. If it were by lascivious touching, you shall say, I have so often dishonestly touched such a sort of person, without adding any thing more particular, unless by the touching there followed something that might change the kind of the sin. If you have sinned in word, you shall say, I have spoken filthily or immodest words to excite one to sin, or to divert myself, without rehearsing what you said. If you have offended in thought, you shall say, I have had an unchaste thought, I consented to it, I have taken delight in it, I have continued it: without particularising, I thought on such or such a thing, as many do to their confusion, not being obliged to it by the sacrament. These things are so clear, that it seems every one ought to be almost instructed of them by himself; and we should not have spoken of them, did we not observe the contrary to be frequently practised: but there are some persons so stupid, that they want a candle at noon-day; and the scrupulous shall by this learn, that they ought not to declare their sins in any other manner; they ought to explain them as they are taught by the doctors of the church, and content themselves with that, since they are obliged to do no more.

SECTION V.

In what manner Sins of Thought are to be confessed

ADVICE V. Because there is some particular difficulty in confessing well sins of thought, I shall succinctly show how this ought to be done. A man when assaulted by an evil thought can behave himself only after one of these four ways: he will either immediately repel it, or for some time entertain it, or determine to put in execution, or continue in it purposely and deliberately, with delight. For the first, it is clear there is no sin, but merit and a reward to be expected; and so there is nothing to be confessed. And if the combat were so obstinate that it should continue a whole day, he who resists is so far from committing any sin, that, on the contrary, it is an occasion of merit for him, and a means to obtain a reward. The second is a venial sin, more or less considerable according to the time one shall have continued in it; the manner of confessing it is to say, I accuse myself of having had a thought of impurity, of hatred, or of anger, and that I have not rejected it as I ought, but indulged some time in it. As to the third, when one consents to this thought, and resolves to put it in execution, though the act follows not, it is a mortal sin, and of the same kind as the act itself would be; for the exterior act has essentially nothing more than the interior. For the fourth, which is the delaying voluntarily in an evil thought.

whether it respects revenge, impurity, stealth, &c., it is a mortal sin, and is termed in morality, *delectatio morosa*; that is, *a lingering delight*; as if one should say, though I drink not in the tavern, I take delight in thinking on it; and there are ordinarily none but dissolute, vicious souls, and such as give themselves up to sensual pleasures, that fall into such sins; for though this is not a consenting to the act of the sin, it is yet a consenting to the delight it gives, and puts a person in evident danger of consenting to the act. This is to be understood, when a man sees and considers what he thinks, and yet repels it not; for if when he makes reflection on the evil thought that occurs to him, he endeavors to shake off this flame from him, it will then be no mortal sin, because he stays not willingly in it, but it will be a venial one, because he should have taken more care not to be surprised by it. This manner of sin respects all mortal sins, though it be more frequent in sins of the flesh, of hatred, or of revenge, which commonly are more fiery and deeper rooted than the rest.

This is a disorder into which those very often fall that are wholly addicted to impurity and vice, who seeing themselves deprived of the means to satisfy their brutish desires, do what they can to enjoy, at least in thought, their detestable pleasures, especially when they dread dishonor, or that a strict watch kept over them hinders their accomplishing them in act. Nor is it less common amongst those who are violently possessed by some criminal, carnal passion;

this is a tyranny that seizes on the heart with a strange command, that carries it away, and keeps it continually fixed on the base object; and therefore there is nothing so dangerous as to give this sort of affections entrance into one's soul; for it is to lodge in one's house a cruel tyrant, and a destroyer of innocence, and to keep by one a secret allurements to all sins. Those sins may be also committed by married persons, in respect of husband and wife, when they entertain such thoughts with pleasure or delight: so dangerous is this abominable sin!

SECTION VI.

Of taking heed not to prejudice our Neighbor's Reputation.

ADVICE VI. The sixth advice, to preserve our neighbor's reputation, confessing our own sins in such a manner as not to discover those of another, nor even to name any person. It is sufficient to say, I have sinned with one that is married, or that is single. If the circumstance to be expressed is such as the confessor may by it know of whom we speak, we must then seek another confessor; and if that cannot be done, we may, in such an impossibility, tell the circumstance, for the confessor will not reveal it; and this declaration tends not to defame our neighbor, but to discover our own crimes. We must also be very exact, neither excusing our sins nor aggravating them with any excess, nor telling a

certain thing for doubtful, nor a doubtful for certain; but putting all things in their quality, telling them simply as they are, and never swerving from the truth.

CHAPTER VIII

Of cases in which the Confession is null, and must be reiterated.

To the end it may more clearly appear of what importance all those things are of which we have treated, I have thought it would be very proper to relate in few words, the most ordinary cases in which the confession is null, and consequently, must be reiterated.

The first is, when the penitent has in his confession told a lie in a matter of mortal sin. The second, if he has deliberately and on purpose omitted to accuse himself of any mortal sin; that is, if he understood what he concealed to be a mortal sin; for if he then thought it not so, but has since been better instructed, it will be sufficient to accuse himself of this particularly, without reiterating his whole confession: and though the ignorance were such that it could not excuse his first omission, when he fell into it, it is nevertheless sufficient to discharge him of this new obligation. The third is, if having been a long time from confession, he has not been careful enough in examining his conscience; for in this case forgetful-

ness excuses not the penitent, but, on the contrary, renders him more culpable. The fourth is, when the penitent has not a firm resolution to leave the sin in which he is, or when he will not restore what he ought. The fifth, when he is excommunicated, and has not taken care to get himself absolved of his excommunication before his coming to this sacrament.

It is however to be observed, that in all these cases which require the reiterating the confession, if it be made to the same confessor, it will not be necessary to repeat anew all the sins one has confessed, if the confessor remember them; but it will suffice only to say, I accuse myself of all the sins I confessed such a day, and moreover of such and such a fault, which obliges me to reiterate my confession; but it is always safer to reiterate the confession, And because most men have great reason to apprehend that they have been guilty of some of these defects in the confessions they have made, it is a very prudent and wholesome advice for those who have any care of their salvation, to make once in their life a general confession, to put away entirely all these negligences, and afterwards to begin a new life, and watch over themselves with more attention. In fine, for the help of the weak, and the ease of those whose memory is defective, we have thought it would not be amiss to insert a short table of sins, according to which penitents may examine their consciences, and prepare themselves to come properly disposed to this sacrament. It is not our intention in presenting you with this memorial, to

take up a great number of sins which rarely happen, and are little known, (as some authors have done,) but to set before you only those into which men most commonly fall.

FIRST COMMANDMENT.

“I am the Lord thy God, thou shalt not have strange gods before me.”

Since, as St. Augustin says, God is to be honored by the three theological virtues, Faith, Hope, and Charity, we ought in this place to speak of the sins we have committed against these virtues. And first, as for what concerns Faith, the penitent shall declare whether he has doubted of any article of faith, for he who doubts in faith, is an infidel.

Nay, though he has not absolutely doubted, if he has even in any manner staggered, or not been sufficiently firm in matters of faith, it is a sin.

If he has with too much curiosity desired to search into matters of faith.

If he has given credit to dreams, divinations, lots, and witchcraft, or has made use of any of these things.

If he has given credit to, or carried about him any superstitious writings, containing obscure and unknown words and figures.

If he was a free-mason, or abetted the principles of free-masonry.

If he has performed any work of devotion with an ill intention, as, to the end any one might die.

As concerning blasphemy in matters of faith, let him accuse himself if he has blasphemed God or his saints.

If he has been dissatisfied with the Divine Providence, nor submitted to the will of God; if he has murmured against him, or complained of him for the afflictions and troubles he has sent him, as if he were not just or merciful.

If in this rage he has desired his own death, or wished God would take him out of the world, testifying that he was weary of the life he gave him.

As to Hope, let him examine himself whether, in the adversities that have befallen him, he has had such confidence in God as he

ought, accompanied with such courage and consolation as this lively confidence ordinarily brings with it.

If, on the contrary, he has placed his confidence in creatures, and in the powers of this world.

If he has despaired to obtain pardon of his sins, or amendment of his life.

If, on the contrary, through a presumptuous confidence of being pardoned for his offences, he has persisted in a wicked life, or put off his repentance from day to day, or to the hour of his death.

As concerning Charity, let him accuse himself if he has not loved God above all things, with all his heart, and with all his soul, as he is obliged to do.

If he has done good works rather for some human respect or interest, than for the love of God.

If he has not been careful to recommend himself every day to God; if he has not daily given him thanks for his benefits, and principally for having created him, redeemed him, and made him a Christian, and that he is not an infidel or a heretic.

If he knows not his prayers, and what a Christian is bound to do.

If he has ill treated God's servants, those that pray, confess, and communicate; if he has scoffed at them, or spoken ill of them.

If he has put himself in danger to offend Almighty God, by doing something which he doubted to be a sin.

SECOND COMMANDMENT.

"Thou shalt not take the Name of the Lord thy God in vain."

If he has sworn any thing, knowing, or doubting it was false, or if he took no care whether what he swore were true: if he has promised any lawful thing with an oath, not having intention to perform it when he swore.

If he has sworn without an intent to do as he swore.

If he has sworn not to do a good act, as not to lend *gratis*, nor to help any one in necessity, nor to visit nor speak to one that he ought in charity: this oath bindeth not, no more than the following:

If he has, on the contrary, sworn to do any evil.

He must also accuse himself of those oaths by which he curses

or imprecates on himself any evil, which are very common; as, let such a thing come on me; let such an accident befall me.

If he has been the cause of any one's swearing falsely, or not performing a lawful oath he may have made.

If he has been accustomed to swear frequently: it is a perilous habit, because it puts us in danger of sometimes swearing falsely.

If he has omitted to reprehend his children or servants when he has heard them swear.

As concerning vows; if he has broken any vow, or too long delayed to fulfil it.

If he has made a vow to do some evil, or not to do some good: neither of these vows obliges.

Great care is also to be taken that, in granting the change of any vow, it be done with great prudence.

THIRD COMMANDMENT.

“Remember that thou keep holy the Sabbath Day.”

If he has broken any holyday, by doing or commanding any servile work to be done on it, except it were some small matter.

If he has neglected to hear a whole Mass on such days, without lawful cause.

If he has not behaved himself at Mass, at divine service, and in holy places, with such reverence as is due to them; or if he has employed himself there in gazing, talking, or laughing.

If he has not taken care that his children and servants should hear Mass on such days.

If he has spent the holydays in gaming or vanities.

If he has neglected the hearing of sermons.

If, being excommunicated, he has been present at divine service, or received any sacrament.

FOURTH COMMANDMENT.

“Honor thy Father and thy Mother.”

This commandment comprehends. 1. The duties of children towards their parents, and of parents towards their children. 2. Of servants towards their masters, and of masters towards their servants. 3. Of superiors towards their inferiors, and of inferiors

towards their superiors. 4. Of the wife towards the husband, and of the husband towards his wife. 5. Of sons-in-law towards their fathers-in-law, and of fathers-in-law towards their sons-in-law. There is in a manner but one and the same rule for all these, and there may be also added to it what young people owe to their elders, and all those who have received favors, to their benefactors.

According to this order, a son ought first to examine himself, if he has slighted his father or mother, if he has treated them with disrespect, or spoken ill of them.

If he has disobeyed them in things that were lawful.

If he has not succored them in their necessities.

If he has behaved himself disdainfully or injuriously to them, because they were poor, or of mean condition.

If he has not performed their last wills and testaments.

If he has wished their death, to enjoy their estates or property.

As for fathers; let them consider if they have taken such care of their children as they ought, especially in teaching them to know and serve God.

If they have not rebuked or chastised them when they have seen them neglect their duties, or frequent evil company.

If they have been too indulgent to them, in letting them have their own will, and follow their evil inclinations.

For masters: they ought to observe the same things, in as much as regards their domestics, and to provide them what is necessary for them.

Let them consider also, if they have been careful of them when they were sick, and caused them to receive the sacraments.

If they suffered them to neglect their duty to God, or to fall into vice, being able to hinder it.

Fathers-in-law and their sons-in-law are obliged to live in peace, and a good understanding; and therefore let them examine themselves, and see whether there is any enmity between them; if they have had any quarrel, or given one another evil words: if worldly interests have made them desire one another's death.

Let married persons consider their duties: the husband, if he has treated his wife lovingly; if he has not abused her by words or otherwise. The wife, if she has misbehaved herself towards her husband; if she has disobeyed him; if she has at any time offended him by injurious words, and thereby given him occasion

to lose his patience, or break forth into oaths. If there be **any** cause of jealousy between them.

Let subjects honor their superiors; let them see if they have been disobedient to them; if they have contemned the laws and orders they have given them; if they have despised them in their hearts; if they have spoken ill of them; if they have judged rashly of them, putting an ill interpretation on their actions, saying they did them for interest, or any other worldly respects; if they have not shown reverence to persons placed in office and dignity.

If they have contemned aged persons; if they have not honored them; if they have mocked them, or scoffed at them.

If they have been ungrateful to their benefactors; if they have forgotten their favors, or, which is much more infamous, rendered them evil for good.

FIFTH COMMANDMENT.

“Thou shalt not kill.”

The soul being far more considerable than the body, the penitent ought, in the first place, to reflect if he has not **spiritually** slain any one, by having incited him, or given him counsel or occasion, to sin mortally; which is called the sin of scandal.

If he has accompanied him, favored him or given him assistance in any wicked action.

As to the body; if he has killed any one; if he has desired or wished his neighbor's death; if he has prayed to God for it.

If he has challenged or accepted a challenge, or encouraged, assisted, or was present at duelling; this being a heinous sin though frequent.

If he has borne a deliberate hatred against any one, with a design to be revenged of him, and how long this hatred has continued.

If he has taken away any one's reputation, with the scandal of his neighbor.

If he has engaged in factions and quarrels, and if he has favored them.

If he has threatened any one, or given him reproachful language, not being his servant, or under his government.

If he has refused to forgive him who has humbly asked pardon of him.

If, having offended any one by words or actions, he would not desire his pardon, either by himself, or by a third person, or if he has not sufficiently satisfied him for his offence.

SIXTH COMMANDMENT.

“Thou shalt not commit Adultery.”

In all sins God may be offended by thought, word, and deed; but it more frequently happens in this. And if we are so unhappy as to fall any of these three ways into sin, we must declare the quality and circumstance of the person with whom we have offended, as we have already said.

According to this order then, when a penitent shall accuse himself of his thoughts, he shall tell if he has been negligent in speedily resisting his unclean thoughts; if he has consented to them with purpose to put them into execution if he had an opportunity; if he has wilfully and deliberately taken delight in them, knowing what he did.

As to words; if he has spoken filthy and immodest words; if he has taken pleasure in such kind of discourses.

If he has solicited any one to sin by words, letters, or the interposition of a third person.

As to deeds; if he has consummated the sinful act, or, if it has not been consummated, if he has been guilty of unchastely touching either himself or any other person.

If he has fallen into any voluntary pollution; if he has himself procured it, or if it befell him in his sleep, of which the judgment must be according to the cause preceding it, and the sorrow or delight following it.

If he has done any thing to provoke others to this sin, either by painting, loose or wanton dress, showing one's self at windows, or other open places, and the like.

If he has endeavored to corrupt the chastity of others by presents, promises, true or false, or any other means whatever.

If he has not avoided the occasions of sin, as dangerous company and conversation, or the having in his own house the occasion of sinning, which is the greatest and most to be feared of all.

If he has taken pleasure in reading such books as might provoke him to sin.

If he has not had recourse to fasting, prayer, the sacraments, or other spiritual remedies, when he has found himself tempted by this sin.

SEVENTH COMMANDMENT

"Thou shalt not Steal."

If he has taken any thing belonging to another, by deceit, violence, usury, or simony.

If he keeps another's goods against the owner's will, and does not restore it. Nor is it sufficient to have a design of restoring it hereafter, but he must immediately do it, though by doing this act of justice he should be driven to want something requisite for the decency of his condition; particularly if the owner himself be much endamaged by want of it.

If he detains his servants' or workmen's wages, or money due to tradesmen, against their will.

If he restores not such things as he has found, when he knows the owner.

If in buying or selling he has used any deceit in the wares, price, weight, or measure; if he has bought of such as were not capacitated to sell, as of children and the like; if he has taken of them any thing they ought not to give.

If, under pretence of selling on credit, he has taken above the just price, having no other just cause to do so; which he shall submit to the judgment of his confessor.

If he has lent upon usury, or entered into society with any one where the loss and gain are uncertain, with covenant to have his whole principal secured to himself.

If he has cheated any way, and gained by it.

If he has played for more than was convenient for one of his condition.

If he has played with minors, or persons under age, for more than they could play for.

If in gaming he has sworn, quarrelled, or given evil language.

If he has not faithfully discharged the employ for which he is paid: which respects not only workmen, but also those that are

in the service of great persons, as their cashiers, stewards, overseers, or other officers; for if their master has received any damage by their negligence, they are bound to make it good.

If he who has the disposal of public offices, benefices, and other important employs, regards only the persons to whom he gives them, and if he bestows them for worldly respects, and not according to justice.

If he has advised the giving of a benefice or office to an unworthy person, or one that is unfit for it.

If he has not paid dues to his pastor.

EIGHTH COMMANDMENT.

“Thou shalt not bear False Witness.”

This commandment contains two great branches; the one comprehends the sins which are committed in judgment by the judges, lawyers, and witnesses, jury, plaintiff, and defendant; the other, slanders, detractions, mockeries, suspicions, lies and flatteries, which are so common in the world.

As for the first, it is for the penitent to consider, if he is or has been a judge, lawyer, witness, or jury-man, and conformably to accuse himself of what concerns these employs.

As for the second branch, he who confesses shall first reflect if he has borne any false witness.

If it is a woman, she shall accuse herself, if through anger or jealousy she has spoken unseemly of any other woman, saying, that she behaves herself ill, that she brings others into bad company, that she is a bad woman, or a thief, when she misses any thing out of her house: for to speak thus, when there is but little ground for it, is also to bear false witness.

If he has spoken ill of any one with a bad intention, and design to do him a displeasure, which is called detraction; if he has revealed any grievous and secret fault of another, whose reputation is blemished by it, though he had no design to prejudice him; for though the thing be true, he is obliged to restore his good name, which he had taken away.

If he has taken delight in hearkening to detractors, and if he has either excited them to detraction, or encouraged them in it, if he has been too light in reporting the evil he has heard of another.

If he has not defended his neighbor's reputation, when defamed, knowing him to be innocent.

If he has found fault with another person's conduct uncharitably; if he has mocked or scoffed at the defect of others, either in body or mind; if he has judged rashly of his neighbor's words or actions, putting an ill construction on that which might have been taken in good part, or which is more dangerous, if he has spoken that as certain which he only suspected in his heart.

If he is suspicious, taking occasion from the smallest matters to believe ill of his neighbor; if he has sown divisions, or raised discontents between friends, by carrying tales from one to another, which often produces great enmities.

If he has told any lie, to the prejudice or disadvantage of his neighbor, or in any other manner.

If he has obtained any thing by false information, which he could not of right have expected.

If he has discovered any thing entrusted to him as a lawful secret; if he has opened another's letters.

We have spoken of the ninth and tenth commandments in what we have said concerning the sixth and seventh.

OF THE SEVEN CAPITAL SINS.

Of Pride.

Sin I.—Pride is an inordinate desire of one's own excellence; this is a sin whence many others proceed, the principal of which are vain-glory, ambition, presumption, ostentation, and hypocrisy. According, therefore, to this, he who shall perceive himself infected with this sin, may accuse himself of every one of these kinds in the following manner:

And first, as touching vain-glory: if he has gloried in having done any wicked action, as in having been revenged, in having beaten or dishonored any one, &c.

If he has attributed to himself any glory for vain qualities, and such as deserve it not; as, for the beauty of his face, the comeliness of his body, the fashion of his clothes, his train of servants, wealth, descent, and such like things, which are of very little importance.

If he has gloried vainly in those that are indeed good, and

worthy of glory ; as in his virtue, knowledge, and prudence, all the glory of which ought to be given to God alone.

If he has delighted in being flattered, or receiving praises from men, with too much complacency for himself, and without referring the glory to Almighty God.

As concerning ambition: if he has excessively desired honor and vain-glory, and has for that cause done any thing contrary to his duty.

If he has been so afraid of shame, ill-repute, or disesteem, as, for the avoiding of these inconveniences, to have done what he ought not, or omitted what he ought to have done.

If, through the sole apprehension of men's speeches, he has abstained from doing any good: as confessing his sins, communicating, hearing Mass, conversing with devout persons.

As for what respects presumption: if he has been too much conceited of himself, esteeming himself more virtuous, more learned, more wise, or more noble, than he is; and if, on the other side, he has too good an opinion of himself for what he is indeed, not attributing the glory of it to God.

If he has too great confidence in his own judgment, knowledge or virtue; if for that reason he will not receive counsel, advice, or correction from others. If, for the same reason, he defends manifest faults, seeking excuses in his sins.

If not to seem overcome, he obstinately contends against what he knows to be true and reasonable.

If he has little esteemed other persons, speaking contemptibly of them; if, with this presumption of himself, he has derided or scorned the weakness or ignorance of others.

As for what regards hypocrisy: if he has affected to appear what he is not, or desired to be thought better than he is, to procure himself vainly a reputation amongst men.

And, in fine, as concerning ostentation; if he has through vanity, praised himself, and put a greater value on his actions than he ought: if he has boasted of having committed any sin, as of having dishonored any woman, beaten or misused any person; if he has vaunted of any thing he never did, especially if it were sinful, that he might pass for a man of courage.

Covetousness.

Sin II.—If he is covetous; if he has hoarded up much money without a reasonable cause; or if, on the contrary, he has been prodigal, and squandered away his estate.

If he spends beyond his ability, and, to support it, reduces himself to necessity, and defrauds his family of their due; if he provides not what is fitting for his children and servants.

If he is such an inordinate lover of riches, that he forgets God, and the salvation of his soul, to satisfy his covetousness.

If he has desired any one's death, in order to enjoy his estate, or for any advantage he expected from it.

Of Lechery.

Sin III.—This is treated of in the Sixth Commandment.

Of Anger.

Sin IV.—Let the penitent in the first place, consider, if he has been so angry with himself as to wish or desire his own death. If in his anger and fury he has hurt himself; if he has given himself to the devil, cursed himself, or attempted to hurt himself.

As concerning his neighbor: if he has been angry with him, or taken dislike to him without cause.

If he has spoken with anger or abuse to him; if he has given him injurious language, calling him thief, drunkard, or fool, if it be not to correct him as his servant.

If to vex him he has upbraided him with the faults he has fallen into; through the same motive, he has uttered the same injurious words, or discovered the same faults of the person he would affront, in his absence.

If he has cursed, or offered to the devil, any of God's creatures; if he has wished vengeance on them.

If he is obstinate, choleric, quarrelsome, and outrageous in his words and reasonings.

Of Gluttony.

Sin V.—If he has broken the fasts of the church.

If he has eaten flesh meat on prohibited days.

If he has eaten with such excess, or of such meats as have prejudiced his health.

If he has drunk or eaten too much, too often, or with too great sensual delight.

Of Envy.

Sin VI.—If he has deliberately been displeased at his neighbor's prosperity.

If he has rejoiced at another's misfortune; as, to see him fallen into losses.

If he has spoken ill of him to do him injury in his person or reputation, or to raise his own on the ruin of another's; if he has discovered any of his neighbor's secret faults, to diminish the esteem that might be had of him, and if he has, for the same cause, been displeased when he has been well spoken of.

Of Sloth.

Sin VII.—If he has through sloth omitted to do any good work; as, to hear Mass, or to pray, particularly when he was obliged to do it.

If he has done the works of God coldly and negligently.

If he is inconstant in his good designs and purposes; if he leaves his exercises of piety on the least occasion; if he delays them from day to day.

If he mis-spends his time in vain thoughts, idle words, or unprofitable actions.

If he is extraordinarily afflicted at the troubles and adversities that befall him; and if, on the contrary, he is too much puffed up with prosperity and good success, not giving God the glory of it.

Of the Works of Mercy.

Let him, in the first place, accuse himself if he has been negligent in the spiritual works of mercy, particularly if he has not given counsel or advice to those to whom he profitably might; if he has neglected to reprehend them for their faults, especially those of whom he was obliged to take care.

If, in performing this duty, he has done it with such anger, or with so little moderation, that he did more hurt than good; if he has not been moved with so many disorders, miseries, and here-

sies, as are in the world, and if he has not prayed God to remedy them.

As to corporal works of mercy: let him consider, if he has assisted his neighbor in his troubles and necessities, and if he has given alms to the poor according to his ability.

If he thinks them burdensome to him, if he speaks ill of them, if he gives them harsh words, if he shows himself displeased at their importunity, if he derides them.

Of other particular Accusations, according to the State or Condition one is in.

Besides these accusations, which may be common to all sorts of persons, there are some others more particular, which regard the state and condition of every one. There is a difference between the obligations of a bishop, of a curate, of a priest, of a religious person, of a merchant, of a judge, of a lawyer, of a physician; and thus the faults they commit in their functions are different, and they ought particularly to declare them.

Prelates, and all that have charge of souls, ought to accuse themselves, if they have neglected the duty incumbent on them, to feed their flocks with their doctrine, example, and prayers.

Priests, of what concerns their office, and the celebration of Mass.

Religious persons, of the vows and the obligations of their order.

Judges, if for any worldly respects, or other ill motives, they have violated justice; if they have too long delayed it. Lawyers, if they have maintained unjust causes; if they have put off trials, or if they have not examined their client's case with care enough.

Plaintiffs and defendants, if their pretensions were unjust; if they effected delays to perplex affairs, and render them obscure; if they have concealed or torn papers that testified the truth; or if they have gained the judges by favor, cabals, or open corruption.

Witnesses, if they have declared the truth, without favor or affection.

Let merchants accuse themselves of dealing in prohibited traffic, and if in their buying and selling they have done any thing contrary to justice. And so of others, every one according to his condition.

General Directions for distinguishing between Mortal and Venial Sin.

In all those sorts of sins we have here set down, it would not have been amiss to declare which are mortal, and which are venial sins; because we are, of necessity, obliged to confess all our mortal sins, but as to our venial sins we are not bound to confess them, if we are certain that they were only venial. But since this matter cannot be explained in a few words, we will content ourselves with giving some general directions concerning this point, leaving the rest to the judgment of the confessor.

To know then what is mortal, and what is venial sin, these two following rules are ordinarily observed. The first is, that whatsoever is contrary to charity, is mortal sin; and by charity we understand the love of God and our neighbor: according to this rule, whatever is against God's honor, or our neighbor's good, in any matter of importance, is a mortal sin; as, to have any way prejudiced him in his honor, in his estate, or the like; for this destroys charity, in which the life of the soul consists, and is therefore rightly called mortal sin, because it takes away its spiritual life. But whatsoever is not materially against charity, is a venial sin; as some idle words, which injure nobody, some vain complacency, some hastiness, some kind of sloth or gluttony, as the eating a little more than is necessary, and other faults of the like nature. The second and more particular rule is, that whatsoever breaks any commandment of God or his church, is a mortal sin. Thus whosoever offends against the commandment, which says, "Thou shalt not steal;" or against that which says, "Thou shalt not commit adultery;" or against the precepts of the church, which ordains the confessing once a year, or the communicating at Easter, commits a mortal sin. It is nevertheless to be observed, that what is of itself a mortal sin, may, notwithstanding, happen to be only venial, by reason of its circumstances; for example, he who steals a bunch of grapes, though he steals, commits not a mortal sin, if he did not think that it was a mortal sin when he was taking it, or doubted that it might be such, because of the small value of the thing.

It is also to be observed, that there are three sorts of commandments: some are negative; as, "Thou shalt not kill," &c.; which oblige always, and at all times: others are affirmative;

as, to give alms, to be sorry for one's sins, to love God; these bind always, though not at all times, but only when occasion requires; the third sort are mixed, and have somewhat in common both with the negative and affirmative ones; as to restore another man's goods; because this precept on the one side commands us to restore, and on the other forbids us to retain what belongs not to us: so those which are of this nature, bind in both manners; to wit, always, and at all times. And thus it is not enough for him who owes, to have a purpose of making restitution hereafter, he is obliged to do it out of hand, and not to keep another's goods against the will of the owner, according to the nature of the negative commandment, which enjoins it, and obliges always and at all times.

CHAPTER IX.

Of the third part of Penance, which is Satisfaction.

AFTER contrition and confession must follow satisfaction. This is the third part of penance, and by this God is satisfied for the faults committed against him. For the better understanding this important instruction, it is to be considered, that as he who breaks the laws of the commonweal, is obliged to suffer the penalties ordained by those laws; so he who breaks the laws of God, is liable to the punishments appointed by Divine Justice. These penalties are undergone either in this life or the next; that is, either in this world, in purgatory, or in hell; in hell the torments are eternal; in purgatory the pains indeed last not for ever, but yet they are so terrible, that, as St. Augustin says, all the torments of this world, though even the most horrid ever suffered

by the martyrs, are not in the least to be compared to them. Fastings and corporal austerities, though but light sufferings, exempt us nevertheless from this dreadful punishment; for since God in these things regards not so much the sharpness of what is suffered, as the will with which this sacrifice is offered him: and since what is free and voluntary in this world, is forced in the other; a little pain, voluntarily endured in this life, has more value, and gives more ample satisfaction, than many great ones suffered of necessity in the next.

On which you will perhaps ask me, if then the sacrament of penance is not sufficient to deliver us from the punishment due to sin, how does that of baptism produce this effect; for it effaces all, and at the same time absolves men both from the pain and the guilt? I answer you, that there is a great difference between these two sacraments; that of baptism is a spiritual regeneration, and a new birth of the interior man; and thus, as a thing which is born anew, ceases immediately to be what it was, and receives a new being, without retaining anything of what it had before; as, when of a kernel there grows up a tree, the kernel loses its being, and the tree receives a new one; so, when a man is spiritually born again, he at the same time ceases to be that old man, that is, that child of wrath and perdition he was before; and begins to be a new man, which is a child of grace, and free at the same time both from guilt and pain. But the sacrament of penance ope-

rates not in this manner: it annihilates not past sins, as a regeneration; but cures them as a remedy. This wholesome medicine sometimes indeed entirely restores the health of the soul, but sometimes also it restores it not so perfectly; it frequently leaves in the patients the relics of their ancient infirmity, which, with care and good government, wear away in time. Thus penance sometimes cures perfectly, that is, both of pain and guilt, when it is accompanied with perfect contrition; such as was that of St. Mary Magdalen, and some others; but when the contrition is not so full, it takes not away all the punishment which must be suffered either in this life or the next. The manner of men acting one with another gives us an example of this conduct. A lord, who shall have committed a capital crime against his prince, may afterwards do him such great services as will render him worthy of his favor, and obtain a general pardon of the punishment which was due to his offence; he may also do him others not so considerable, and by that means recover his prince's favor, with some change of his punishment, as banishment instead of death. David dealt thus with his son Absalom, for a murder he had committed on the person of his brother Amnon, in a cause of indignation he had against him; he banished him three years out of his kingdom; but after that time, being willing to pardon him, he did it on condition he should not see his face, nor enter into his palace. 2 *Kings* xiii. 14. In like manner, when the condition of a sinner is not

so perfect, God pardons his sin by the virtue of the sacrament, and exempts him from the eternal punishment he had merited, and often from a part of the temporal; but he will not permit this criminal to enter into his palace, nor so soon to see his face, till time has purged away his stains, either in this life or the next. Thus God dealt with David; seeing that he confessed his sin, and that his repentance was sincere, he pardoned him the adultery into which he had fallen, and re-established him in the grace he had lost; (*ibid.* xii.) but he afterwards sent him great afflictions, for a crime which was pardoned him. *Ibid.* xxiv.

But what sin was ever more pardoned than that of Aaron and Moses at the waters of contradiction? *Num.* xx. Nevertheless, though the sin was forgotten, the sentence pronounced by the Divine Justice had its effect; (*Deut.* iii. 32.) and these two holy personages, for this cause, were not allowed to enter the Land of Promise. Thus then it happens to the greatest part of men in this sacrament; the sin is there pardoned, divine grace is there acquired by the virtue of Jesus Christ's passion, which operates divinely in it; but often by reason of the imperfection of the sorrow, a man remains obliged to certain degrees of punishment, in such measures as it pleases God to inflict them: and there being nothing so advantageous for the discharging of these punishments, as acts of piety and good works, those are, without doubt, most efficacious which are most labo-

rious, and most irksome to our flesh. For since the flesh," as St. Gregory says, "has, by its irregular delights, cast us into the crime, it is fit she should punish herself for it, and by voluntary chastisements, get rid of her evil: and since we have made no scruple to displease God for the pleasing of our senses, reason requires that we should afflict and mortify them for the satisfying of God."

CHAPTER X.

On the Origin and Cause of Satisfaction.

BEING thoroughly persuaded, as we ought to be by the reasons I have alleged, of the necessity of satisfaction, let us now see what is the origin of it to the end you may better know how you ought to make it.

Remember then what I observed to you in the beginning of this book, that true penance and the conversion of a sinner is the greatest favor one can receive in this life. Glory is indeed something more excellent than grace, since the one is grace begun, and the other grace perfected; but in effect it is a more extraordinary favor of God to draw a man out of sin and put him in the state of grace, than to give him glory after he has given him grace. Moreover as baptism, which is the door of the sacraments and the beginning of man's regeneration, brings along

with it all the virtues and all the gifts of the Holy Ghost, with the grace from which all these benefits proceed ; so true penance, which is the beginning of our resurrection, acquires all these gifts, but particularly a new knowledge of spiritual and divine things, to which man, as dwelling in the regions of darkness and the shadow of death, was in a manner blind ; it acquires a new charity and love of God, which is the form of true penance and all other virtues, and causes in our soul wonderful sentiments and effects of this virtue ; for as natural love is the source of all the other natural affections and passions, so the supernatural love of God is the origin of all spiritual affections and motions, which are so much the greater, as this love is more powerful. And as the grace of conversion is sometimes greater, as was that of St. Paul, of St. Augustin, and several others ; and sometimes less, as the ordinary conversions which we daily see ; so the interior motions and affections of the soul, which come from this grace, are sometimes greater and sometimes less.

This virtue then causes first to spring up in the soul so much sorrow and so great a displeasure for having offended God, that a true penitent would rather choose to have suffered a thousand sorts of torments, than to have sinned against such a master. It imprints in his heart a true fear of the Divine Majesty, whom he knows that he has offended ; it renders him sensible how justly he has merited his indignation and wrath, and makes him apprehend

the effects of it; it makes him conceive a very great shame of appearing in his presence, like that of the publican in the Gospel, who, covered with shame and confusion, durst not lift up his eyes to heaven. *Luke* xviii. In fine, it excites in him a very strong resolution to satisfy God by the mark of a true penance for the sins committed against him, and an ardent desire of revenging upon his own flesh the evils of which it has been the occasion; for considering that to please this enemy, and to content its irregular desires, he has followed the disorderly love of creatures, and renounced the love he owed to his Creator, he becomes so incensed against his own flesh, that there are not any pains or torments he would not willingly inflict on it, as the only cause of his misfortune.

Such was the spirit of penance which the holy man Job expresses in these words: "I have sinned: what shall I do to thee, O keeper of men?" *Job* vii. 20. As if he would more clearly say, according to St. Augustin's interpretation: O Lord! I acknowledge my sin, and the trouble it gives me is such, that there is no pain I would refuse to suffer for the expiating of it. See, O Lord! what thou pleasest to have me do; behold me ready for whatsoever thou wilt do with me: I have nothing else to offer thee but a heart disposed for whatever thou wilt command it; if it be thy pleasure that I should be burned in raging flames, that my body be torn in pieces, or that I endure any other torment whatsoever. behold I

am ready. I offer myself to thee, bound hand and foot, and lying prostrate before thee; I fly not; I refuse thee not for my Judge; I appeal not from thy judgment; I allege no excuses, nor desire any mitigation of my punishments. Judge me only according to thy will; be thou the knife, and let me be the flesh; cut me where and how thou pleasest, provided thou pardon me the sins I have committed. It was thus David afflicted himself, when he said, "I am afflicted and humbled exceedingly; I roared with the groaning of my heart. Lord, all my desire is before thee, and my groaning is not hidden from thee. My heart is troubled, my strength hath left me, and the light of my eyes itself is not with me." *Psalm xxxvii.* 9, 10, 11. Thus ought all those to humble, afflict, and chastise themselves, who have presumed to offend their God. For (as a holy doctor says,) it is fit, that a soul which has forsaken God, to please herself inordinately in the creature against the will of the Creator, should pay with rigor so lawful a debt, and by voluntary pains purge away the criminal delights with which she hath blinded herself. Since guilt naturally deserves to be followed by pain, which amends and corrects it, it is just that they who have dared to commit many faults, should procure themselves many pains: and since man has by sin separated himself from the Sovereign Good, and foolishly adhered to the creature, which is an intolerable contempt of Almighty God, it is just that, to expiate this so criminal an injury against this

Divine Power, he should by his own will abase himself even to the dust of the earth.

In this manner then do they labor to satisfy God, whose eyes he has opened with his celestial light; to the end that, knowing the greatness of the Divine Goodness, they may therein know also their own extreme vileness, and that the one and the other may be the measure of their satisfaction. To strengthen you in this design, and at the same time not only to produce an example, but also to give confusion to the wretched carelessness which is now found amongst men, I have thought it would not be amiss to set here before your eyes some circumstances of the admirable austerity and rigor of certain penitents whom St. John Climachus found in a monastery, which this holy man, as an eye-witness, relates almost in these very words:

“Being come into this monastery, I beheld there things which the eye of the slothful had never seen, the ear of the negligent has never heard, and the heart of sluggards will never be able to comprehend. I saw there actions and words capable, if I may so speak, to do violence to the Almighty, and bow down his mercy in a moment. I saw some of these holy penitents, who passed whole nights standing upright in the open air, as if they had been immovable; and when sleep began to seize on them, I saw them struggle, by reviling themselves, to keep it off, as unwilling to grant their bodies the least repose. I saw others, who keeping their eyes perpetually fixed

towards heaven, with never ceasing sighs and tears implored the divine mercy and assistance. Others, on the contrary, said with the publican, that they were not worthy to lift up their eyes towards heaven, or to speak unto Almighty God; and thus in sorrow and silence they offered up their souls, filled with confusion and fear. Others there were who, clad with sack-cloth and hair-cloth, hid their faces between their knees, and struck their foreheads against the ground with inexplicable bitterness of heart. I saw some who had watered the earth round about them with their tears, and others that lamented excessively because they could not weep. Several others, mourning over themselves, as we do over the grave of a deceased friend, bewailed the loss of their souls. Others there were, who, ready to roar for grief, eagerly strove to stifle the noise of their complaints, till no longer able to repress them, they were forced to let them break forth with greater violence. I saw some, who by their exterior actions, and by the apparent trouble of their minds, appeared so astonished, that one would have taken them for statues of stone, so insensible to all things had the excess of their sorrow rendered them: their heart was plunged in an abyss of humility; and their scorching grief had dried up all their tears." And a little after, this holy man goes on thus: (*ibid. art. 14 and seq.*) "There one might have seen these holy penitents, full of sorrow, and bowing down to the earth, who contemning all care of their flesh, mingled their

bread with ashes, and their drink with tears. There were heard among them no words, but such as these: Wo! wo! be to us, wretches as we are. It is with justice, O God, it is with justice! Pardon us, if thou pleasest, O Lord, pardon us! Many of them had their tongues hanging out of their mouths, like wearied dogs, through the extremity of the thirst that tormented them: some there were, that in the height of summer stood parching in the sun's most violent heat; and others, on the contrary, in the depth of winter suffered themselves to freeze with cold. Some took a little water to refresh their tongue, but not sufficient to quench their thirst; and others contented themselves with a small morsel of bread, refusing more, and saying, they were not worthy to eat the food of men, since they had lived the lives of beasts.

“Amongst these exercises, it is easy to be imagined there was no room for divertisements or idle discourses, and, consequently, much less for wrath or ill humors; the care of the body, the pleasure of good cheer, and the least shadow of vain-glory, were utterly banished. Their whole employment was to cry day and night to our Lord, and no voice was heard in this company but that of prayer. There were some who, beating their breasts as fiercely as if they were knocking at the gates of heaven, said, O Judge. full of compassion, open to us by thy mercy that gate which our sins has shut against us. Another said, Show thy face to us, O Lord, and ‘make known thy

salvation.' *Psalm* xcvi. 4. Another said, 'Enlighten them that sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death.' *Luke* i. 79. Another said, let thy mercies, O Lord, prevent us speedily, 'for we are become a reproach to our neighbor.' *Psalm* lxxviii. 4. Others said, Perhaps it will please God one day to be reconciled to us, and to behold us with a favorable eye; perhaps we shall one day hear that voice, which will say, to 'them that are bound, come forth: and to them that are in darkness, show yourselves.' *Isai.* xlix. 6.

"They had always death present before their eyes, and speaking to one another they said, 'What will befall us at that last hour, and what shall our end be? Will God revoke the just judgment we have deserved? Shall our prayers have had force enough to ascend to the throne of the Divine Majesty? Shall they be found worthy to be there received? Shall they have advantaged us? and by what merit shall they be applied to us? Shall it be true, that coming forth of our mouths, still altogether unclean and polluted, they have, nevertheless, found favor, before the Lord? Who can tell, whether our good angels, to whose custody God has committed us, are here about us, or whether the stench of our sins has driven them away?' And others answered these demands, saying: Who knows, brethren, as heretofore the Ninivites said, (*Jonas* iii. 9.) whether our Lord will not pardon us, whether he will not turn the eyes of his mercy towards us, and deliver us from death,

after we have invocated him with perseverance, even to the end of our lives? For he is merciful, and our tears and labors will appease him. Let us run, brethren, let us run; for we have need to run, and to run with all our force, that we may get to the place from whence we are fallen. Let us run always towards that mark; let us not spare our filthy flesh; let us revenge on it the excesses it has committed; and let us make it bear the punishments it has made us deserve.

“This is what these true penitents said, and the exterior state of their bodies no less expressed the interior sorrow of their souls. Their countenances represented rather dead than living persons; their eyes were dry, and sunk into their heads; the flesh of their cheeks appeared shrivelled, and, as it were, parched with the scalding of their tears; the hair of their eye-lids was fallen away by reason of their weeping; their knees were hardened like a camel’s skin by their continual prayer; their breasts appeared bruised with blows, and their lungs were so prejudiced by them, that their spittle was always seen mingled with blood. These blessed criminals besought their superior, who might indeed be considered as an angel amongst men, that he would load their necks and hands with chains, that he would put irons on their feet, and let them remain in this condition till the day they should be laid in the grave, of which also they thought themselves unworthy.

“But when the last hour of any of these penitents approached, it was a far more dreadful spectacle to see the actions and motions of their companions at that instant; for they encompassed him on all sides, and with hanging down heads, sad looks, and mournful words, said to him: How dost thou find thyself now, dear brother? What are thy thoughts? What dost thou say? What is thy hope? What dost thou think will become of thee? Hast thou obtained what thou soughtest with so many labors? Dost thou see that the haven of salvation is open for thee? dost thou receive any pledge or certain assurance of it? Does not thy heart perceive some new light, and does it not hear some voice within it, saying to it, ‘Thy sins are forgiven thee; or, ‘Thy faith has made thee whole;’ (*Matt. ix. 2 and 22*) or, on the contrary, tell us, if thou hearest not these terrible words, ‘The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all nations that forget God;’ (*Psalms ix. 18*) or these others, ‘Bind his hands and feet, and cast him into the exterior darkness;’ (*Matt. xxii. 13*) or these, ‘The wicked shall not see the glory of God.’ *Isai. xxvi. 10*. What sayest thou, brother? Speak freely to us for our instruction. We conjure thee to do it, dear brother, to the end we may learn by thy example what we must one day expect; for thy suit is now come to an end; thy cause will soon be decided; the judgment thou shalt receive will be for eternity, and never will be changed; we wait what will be the event of ours, which is yet doubtful

and uncertain. Some answered to these demands, 'Blessed be the Lord, who has not suffered us to be a prey to their teeth.' *Psalm cxxiii.* 6. Others answered with more sorrow and grief, Wo be to the soul which has not faithfully kept the vows of her holy profession, for now is the hour in which she shall know what is prepared for her to all eternity.

"I confess, that having heard and seen all these things, and compared my sluggishness with their sufferings, I wanted but little of falling into despair: for what, think you, is the situation and structure of this monastery? It is nothing but obscurity, stench, and filthiness; all is there hideous and loathsome. Thus it is not without reason called a prison and an abode of criminals, since one cannot so much as look on it without weeping, and entering into the thoughts of a true penance.

"All this will perhaps appear incredible or impossible to the sluggish or negligent; but true penitents, and those who know what the happiness is they have lost by sin, will judge otherwise of it: for the soul which finds herself guilty of having broken the covenant and solemn treaty she has made with her God, and remembers, that with the peace and friendship of the Lord, she has lost the inestimable treasures of his grace, the consolations of the Holy Ghost, and has quenched the fire of charity, which heretofore produced in her such sweet tears, conceives so violent a sorrow for her offences, that she not only suffers all these labors with patience, but would in-

finitely augment them, and even crucify herself, if it were lawful for her so to do. Such were these blessed criminals, or rather these holy fathers, when they remembered their past happiness, and all the sweet and pious exercises they had heretofore employed themselves in, saying with the holy man Job, ‘ Who will grant me, that I may be according to the months past, according to the days in which God kept me ; when his lamp shined over my head, and I walked by his light in darkness ; as I was in the days of my youth, when God was secretly in my tabernacle ; when the Almighty was with me, and my servants round about me ; when I washed my feet with butter, and the rock poured me out rivers of oil ? *Job xxix. 2, 3, &c.*

“ It was thus they called to mind their past happiness, and looking back on all the heavenly favors they had received, they wept bitterly, and melting wholly into tears, said, ‘ Where is now that first purity of our prayers ? where is that confidence with which we offered them to God ? where are those so tender and sweet tears which streamed from our eyes in the midst of the bitterness and contrition of our hearts ? where is that entire chastity of body and soul, which made our principal glory ? where is that perfect loyalty and obedience we had for our superior ? what is become of that heavenly force and that efficacy we observed in the success of our prayers ? All these things have disappeared, and vanished like smoke.’ And uttering these words, the sorrow for their loss,

and the horror they had of themselves, grew so great that they begged of God he would send them during this life all the torments in the world, to be revenged on their bodies for the evils they were the cause of: some desired of him violent diseases; others, to be deprived of their sight, and become objects of misery to the eyes of the world; and others, to be struck with a palsy, which should render all their limbs lame and useless, that they might by present miseries escape those future ones they apprehended.

“In fine, brethren, I know not how I was able to continue so long among such terrible spectacles, and to endure the sight of so many torments and so many tears; I staid there thirty days, wholly astonished at what I saw, which being ended, I returned to visit the superior who governed this monastery. He seeing me quite altered, and wholly transported, and comprehending the cause of my amazement, said to me with his usual sweetness, ‘And well, Father, have you seen the labors of these generous combatants?’ ‘Yes, Father,’ answered I to him, ‘I have not only seen them, but admired them also; and esteem them much more happy who, having fallen, thus bewail their sins, than those, who, having never fallen, bewail not themselves at all; because their fall seems to me, through an admirable effect of grace, to have been an occasion of their more happy and more glorious rising again.’” *S. Joan. Clim. grad. 5. art. 4, & seq.*

St. Climachus tells us not this on the report of another ; he faithfully represents the things he saw with his own eyes ; and though this relation appears a little too long, I thought myself obliged not to omit any thing in it, as well for your benefit, as for several other reasons. The first is, that men may be confounded and humble themselves exceedingly, seeing the cold and dull penances of this time compared with the fervor and rigor of past ages. The second, that we may see how far the charity which the Holy Ghost has for us, goes ; what the strength, and what the lights are, which his grace keeps always in readiness for all the faithful ; and may hope that, as he has communicated it freely to all those who went before us, he will neither refuse it to those who are with us, nor to those that shall come after us, if they persevere in works of penance, as these ancient fathers did. The third, that being grounded on so solid a hope, and strengthened by the example of these saints, we may be stirred up to attempt something more considerable than what we do ; since, in effect, their bodies were no otherwise framed than ours ; nor had they any other God, nor any other assistance in their labors than what we have ; and that setting before you hard and difficult things, you may be the less discouraged to embrace those which are easier.

It is nevertheless true, that no man ought to be dismayed, though he enters not at first into that high perfection of which these saints have left us an ex-

ample ; for, as in the body there are many members of which some are more, and others less honorable, and as in heaven there are many mansions, of which some are higher, and others lower ; so in the church there are different degrees of merit, different institutions, and different sorts of penance, that dispose men for them ; and that, in fine, what is necessary in one manner of life, is not in another. Neither is it absolutely necessary we should attempt at first what great saints have practised ; many of their actions are proposed to us rather to be admired than imitated. What becomes a giant is not fit for a dwarf ; and what serves only to exercise great souls, would ruin those that are weak.

CHAPTER XI.

On the three principal Works by which we satisfy God.

SINCE painful and laborious works are also of their own nature satisfactory, we shall, to follow the doctrine of the church and of the saints, establish three sorts of satisfactory works ; to wit, fasting, alms, and prayer. For these three things, besides their being holy and efficacious, are also not to be performed without giving some pain to our flesh, which thus, by the feeling of pain, satisfies God for the criminal pleasure it took in sinning ; moreover, as there are

three things in the power of men, with which they commonly offend God, to wit, their wealth, their body, and their soul; so it is fit they should make him a generous sacrifice of them, consecrating their estates by liberal alms, their bodies by rigorous fasts, and their souls by continual prayers. It is also a means to accomplish in some sort all that justice requires, since, generally speaking, sin offends either God, our neighbor, or ourselves: now these three virtues regard these three objects, for by fasting the body is chastised, by alms our neighbor is comforted, and by prayer God is honored.

SECTION I.

HE that desires sincerely and with all his heart to satisfy God, must place his principal care in the exercise of these three works, and first begin by fasting. We have said that the pain it brings with it, satisfies for the pleasure which has been taken in sin, and that it inflicts a just punishment on our flesh, which is usually the cause of all our diseases. Moreover, as Saint Bernard says, "Whilst we by fasting abstain from lawful things, we obtain pardon for those that are unlawful; and thus with a short fast, which lasts but for a moment, we redeem the eternal fasts which are suffered in hell; for one only mortal sin deserves hell. In that woful place there is no food tasted. The rich glutton begs but only one drop of water, and in so many ages it is not given him. In that place is no comfort to be found, and

miseries have no limits. Happy then is the fast which secures us from the fasts and torments that never shall have an end." The same saint adds, that "fasting not only washes away sin, but that it also cuts off the root of all vices; that it not only obtains pardon for our faults, but also procures us grace; that it not only effaces past sins, but preserves us from those we might commit in time to come." St. Peter de Ravenna expresses the excellency of fasting by wonderful epithets. He calls it "the palace of God, the camp of Jesus Christ, the wall of the Holy Ghost, the ensign of faith, the mark of charity, the standard of holiness." And St. Augustin assures us, that "fasting purifies souls, raises the understanding, subdues the flesh to the spirit, makes a contrite and humble heart, drives away the darkness of concupiscence, cools the heat of impurity, and kindles the light of charity; that fasting moderates our desires, mortifies our passions, instructs our life, and puts bounds to our covetousness. Fasting is allied to all virtues; poverty acknowledges it for her brother, penance for her son, charity for her mother, prayer for her most faithful companion; it is the destroyer of self-love, the preserver of our health, and one of the most sure and most powerful means to reconcile us to God, and to obtain us his graces." By fasting, the Ninivites stopped the just indignation which God had conceived against them. *Jonas* iii. 10. By fasting, the children of Israel, humbling their souls before God,

found assistance in their necessities. 1 *Kings* vii. 6. By fasting the three children in the fiery furnace were defended from the fury of the king of Babylon. *Dan.* i. 8, 12. By fasting Elias was taken up in the fiery chariot, (4 *Kings* ii.) Moses received the law, (*Exod.* xxiv. 28.) and the Son of God prepared himself to preach the gospel, (*Matt.* iv. 2.) though he had no need of it, but only to give us an example.

Let those then who desire to satisfy God, and take revenge on their sins, that they may enjoy all these advantages, arm themselves with a holy hatred against themselves; that is, against their own flesh; let them execute justice on it; let them punish its excesses by fastings, watchings, disciplines, hair-cloths, coarse apparel, hard lying, and all other austerities they can. Thus they will not only give to God the satisfaction which is due to him, but will triumph also over the most powerful of their enemies, and render their bodies and souls living temples of the Holy Ghost. Govern yourselves, nevertheless, in these exercises, with great prudence; take counsel of the wise; use them with moderation according to their advice, and take heed lest, aiming to destroy an enemy, you destroy yourselves. Chastise the flesh, but preserve to your bodies the strength they stand in need of to the service of God. He commands in his law, that in all sacrifices there should be offered salt, to teach us, that in these which are spiritual sacrifices, we must always mix wisdom and discretion.

Many pious souls, for want of thoroughly weighing this consideration, have ruined their health, and stopped in the midst of their career ; for being obliged, in order to their recovery, to omit the practice of these holy exercises, they have unfortunately found themselves gone much backward in virtue, which is an attendant on the faithfulness and fervor wherewith they are undertaken.

SECTION II.

On the Second, which is Alms.

BUT, brethren, fasting must not go alone ; giving of alms must be its faithful companion, and if you will have it beneficial to you, the works of mercy must go along with it. St. Augustin says excellently, that “fasting, without charity and alms, is like a lamp which hath no oil.” And in another place, speaking to the faithful, he says, “Brethren, give alms and your prayers shall be heard : Jesus Christ will help you to amend your lives, he will pardon you your past sins, he will deliver you from future evils, and he will give you eternal good things.” On this subject St. Peter de Ravenna has also these excellent words : “Though fasting takes away the weakness left by sin, moderates the passions of the flesh, and cuts off many occasions which make us fall into disorder, it nevertheless restores not health without the assistance of mercy, charity, and alms.” “Fasting,” adds he, “cures the wounds of sin, but it takes not away wholly the scar without the precious

balm of alms." The holy man Tobias teaches us, that "alms deliver from all sin, and from death, and will not suffer the soul to go into darkness." *Tob.* iv. 11. Ecclesiasticus affirms, that "as the water quenches fire, so alms resisteth sin." *Eccles.* iii. 33. And St. Ambrose says, that "the force of alms is wonderful; it is a living spring, which with its waters quenches the flames of our vices, and by its effusion, as that of a great river, puts out the fire of our sins; so that, though God be offended, though he be justly provoked to wrath, he pardons, for the sake of their alms, those whom he had resolved to punish for their offences. And St. Augustin says, that "as the fire of hell is quenched by the wholesome water of baptism, so the burning heats of our sins are allayed by alms and other works of justice; insomuch that the pardon of our sins, which is granted us only once in baptism, is daily, as in a new baptism, imparted to us by the means of alms." It is true that this comparison does not hold in all its parts; but it is, however, a great commendation to alms, that it may in something be compared to the saving waters of baptism, which is the source and origin of the spiritual life. Wherefore the prophet Daniel finds no remedy to deliver king Nebuchodonosor from the terrible judgment heaven had pronounced against him, but by counselling him to have recourse to the sacred anchor of alms. "O king," says the prophet to him, "take my counsel, redeem thy sins with alms, and endeavor to obtain the pardon of thy iniquities

by works of mercy towards the poor." *Dan. iv. 27.* For he well knew that there is nothing more prevalent with God, or more likely to incline him to show mercy, than our exercising mercy towards our fellow-creatures. "In what measure you shall mete, it shall be measured unto you again." *Mark iv. 24.* Wherefore at the last day works of charity are so much esteemed, that on them are declared the judgment of our life, and the decision of our eternity. St. Augustin thus explains this evangelical truth: "It is written," says this saint, "Redeem your sins with alms, because in effect our Lord loves the charitable above all things, and recompenses his elect principally in consideration of the relief they have given to the miserable;" as if he should more clearly say, "It is a difficult matter diligently to examine your life, and use mercy towards you; nevertheless go, enter into the eternal kingdom; for I was hungry, and ye gave me to eat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me to drink; so that the kingdom of heaven is not given to you because you have not sinned, but because you have redeemed your sins with alms." As, on the contrary, he will say to the wicked, "Go, ye accursed, into eternal fire, not only because you have sinned, but also because you have neglected to redeem your sins by alms; for if you had at least used this remedy, it would have delivered you from the punishment that is falling on you." *Serm. 50 de Temp.* St. Peter de Ravenna, passes yet farther, when he says, "It is an admirable thing to see how

pleasing to God the relief is that is given to the poor, since that in the kingdom of heaven, in the presence of angels, and in that great assembly of men raised from the dead, there is no mention of the death that Abel suffered, nor of the world which Noah preserved, nor of the faith that Abraham had, nor of the law which Moses gave, nor of the cross to which St. Peter was fastened; but only of the bread that is given to the poor." And St. Chrysostom, delighted with the beauty and power of this virtue, says thus in one of his sermons: "Alms-givings is a friend of God; she is always about him; she obtains graces for whom she will; she breaks the bands of sin; she drives away darkness; she stifles the flame of our passions; the gates of heaven are open to her; those that keep them respect her as a queen; they ask not who she is, nor what she seeks; all go to meet her, and receive her with joy; she is a virgin; she has wings of gold, and her apparel is wonderfully glorious; her countenance is beautiful, and full of sweetness; her swiftness, and the wings she wears, in a moment bring her into God's presence."

Since this virtue then is of so great efficacy, they who design to satisfy God, and obtain of him the mercy they desire, must, as the apostle speaks, clothe themselves with mercy, (*Col.* iii. 12.) and take care to be adorned with all good works belonging to it; let them have great compassion on the miseries of the poor, and relieve them to the utmost of their ability; if they have not wherewithal otherwise to

succor them, let them assist them with their counsels, their cares, and their prayers; or if they are wholly unable to serve them, let them at least have a fellow-feeling for their sufferings; since, as St. Gregory says, "He whose heart is touched with compassion, gives no less than he who exercises liberality towards the poor: for the one gives his wealth, and the other his soul, which is much more precious than all worldly wealth." On which, before I finish this point, I must give you an important advice taken out of St. Augustin, who says, "That of all the works of mercy, with which we may obtain pardon of our sins, there is none greater, or more prevalent, than willingly to pardon those who have offended us." St. Peter Chrysologus expresses the same thing in these words: "Consider, brethren, that you cannot be without sin, and that you always desire your sins should be forgiven you; if you will then be forgiven, you must forgive, and so know that your happiness is in your own hands, and that in pardoning others, you pardon yourselves." St. Cesarius likewise says almost the same: "If you have not wherewithal to relieve the captives, or clothe the naked, be at least very careful to banish out of your heart all kind of ill-will against your neighbor; render not to your enemies evil for evil; on the contrary, love them, and pray for them. Living thus, ground yourself securely on the mercy and promises of God, and fear not to say to him with confidence, 'Give me, O Lord,

for I have given: pardon me, because I have pardoned.' ”

SECTION III.

Of the Third which is Prayer.

THE third, and perhaps most necessary of the works that are called satisfactory, is prayer: this not only serves to fulfil the third part of penance, which is satisfaction, but is especially useful to obtain the first and most important, which is contrition; since by prayer God often infuses the spirit of contrition into the souls of sinners, by prayer they often obtain the remission of their offences; and we see in the gospel, that on the sole consideration of their prayer, pardon was granted to the publican and the prodigal child. Wherefore a prophet exhorts us not to seek before God any other remedies for our evils: “Take with you words, and return to the Lord, and say to him: take away all iniquity, and receive the good: and we will render the calves of our lips.” *Osee* xiv. 3. Thus is God sought in prayer; by this he graciously hears us: if he appears sometimes inexorable, it is only towards the proud and obstinate; but he is benign towards the humble and penitent. Never was any one seen to pray in this manner before God, but he felt at the same time in his soul some sweet breathing of his grace, and some assured pledge of his clemency; and to the end it may not be doubted he would engage his word for it in the prophet Joel.

who says, "Every one that calleth upon the name of the Lord, shall be saved." *Joel* ii. 32.

But to the end this prayer may the better ascend on high, there must be given to her the two wings of which we have spoken, fasting and alms; it is with them she flies swiftly, and stops not till she is come before the throne of God: these are sisters, which must not be separated; they mutually assist, and lend the hand to each other. Mercy, as St. John Climachus says, causes prayer not to come empty into God's presence, and if we show mercy to those that stand in need of it, we shall incline God to show mercy to us. "If you have a love for prayer," says this saint, "you will without doubt also have a love for mercy: for the first will cause God to hear you mercifully, because you have for his sake favorably heard your neighbor." *Grad.* 28, *art.* 40. As for fasting, it is certainly a powerful assistant to prayer; it disposes the soul to do well, and freeing the body of the heaviness caused by the superfluity of meats, renders it lighter to mount towards heaven. Wherefore prayer joined to fasting, besides its becoming thereby more satisfactory, is much more pure and spiritual; for, as the same saint teaches us, "the soul of him that fasts, prays with sobriety and attention; but the soul of an intemperate and sensual person, is always full of imaginations and evil thoughts." *S. Joan. Climac. Grad.* 14, *art.* 27.

As then fasting helps prayer, so prayer helps fasting; since, as St. Bernard says, "prayer gives

strength to fast, and fasting obtains grace to pray." The spirit of prayer, and the sweetness found in it, animate our hearts to mortify the flesh, each of these virtues undertaking what is proper to it, in the sanctification of men. And, to speak with St. Jerome, "by fasting the vices of the body are cured, and by prayer the infirmities of the soul."

Thence we may conclude, that prayer is not only one of the satisfactory works, which is what we principally endeavor to show in this place, but also that it is meritorious, that it is impetratory, and that it causes and nourishes devotion: by prayer, as it is satisfactory, we discharge the debts contracted by our sins; as it is meritorious, we are rendered worthy by it to increase in grace and obtain glory; as it is impetratory, we obtain for it what we ask for with humility; and as it is capable to produce in us the spirit of devotion, we receive by it new lights; we begin to taste how sweet the Lord is; good desires are renewed and strengthened in our hearts; peace and quietness are infused into our souls, together with an extraordinary courage and zeal to embrace all occasions of doing good works, which is properly called devotion.

These four so rare and excellent fruits the virtue prayer brings with it, and consequently it is of extreme importance to exercise ourselves in it with very much attention and perseverance. But since we shall speak of it more at large hereafter, I shall at this time content myself to recommend to you the

reading of the prayers and considerations you may have already seen, when we treated of contrition; it will be good for you to go over them again, and entertain yourself with them for some days, both before and after confession; they will suffice, if you make the reflection on them that you ought, to excite in you a new sorrow for your sins, and new desires to satisfy God: and because there is nothing so powerful to make you enter into these resolutions as the consideration of God's benefits and your own sins, as we have already more fully in that place shown, I advise you more particularly to persist in the contemplation of them. After you shall have employed some days in this exercise, you may proceed to another sort of prayer, which shall be hereafter taught you in the book we shall make for that purpose; and in this manner varying your exercises, you will receive more light, and serve God without difficulty or tiring, and with inexpressible ease and joy.

CHAPTER XII.

A short Examination of Conscience for those that confess often.

HAVING treated of confession for such persons as seldom confess, I have thought it would not be inconvenient to say something of the examen and preparation to be used by those who more frequently come to this sacrament. These good souls suffer

divers disquiets, and are often molested with scruples on this occasion: for on the one side believing, and certainly knowing, that they are not without sins, and on the other side, not knowing how to declare them at the time of confession, they are persuaded they never confess well.

This perplexity may arise from two causes: first, from its being indeed a difficult matter for men to know themselves, and to search thoroughly into the writings of their consciences. It was this made a prophet say, "Who can understand sins?—from my secret ones cleanse me, O Lord." *Psalm* xviii. 13. Who knows all the sins into which he falls? Cleanse me, O Lord, from the offences that are hidden from my eyes and understanding. The second cause is, that the sins of the just, who, as the wise man says, "falls seven times a day," (*Prov.* iv. 16,) are not easily known; they are ordinarily rather sins of omission than commission, as we are wont to speak. For the understanding of which distinction, it is to be observed, that all sins whatever happen one of these two ways; either by committing some evil act, as by breaking any of the commandments of God or the church; or by omitting some good work to which one is obliged, as by not producing acts of the love of God, by not fasting, not praying, &c. The first are so manifest, that they are easily known, because in the committing of them some sensible action must have preceded; the others, which consist not in doing, but in leaving undone, are more hardly discov-

ered ; for who can see what is not ? And so it is not to be wondered if devout persons, especially when they are simple, find not sometimes in them any sins of which they may accuse themselves. They are happy enough to fall very seldom into those we term sins of commission, and that are easily taken notice of : and not discerning sufficiently the others, they approach the confessional only with confusion and affliction of mind.

To remedy their troubles, I resolved to frame the following memorial, which principally treats of these sorts of sins. And because they may be either against God, or ourselves, or our neighbor, we will divide them into three parts, according to the negligence one may be guilty of in respect to these three duties. I know that several of these omissions are not sometimes so much as a venial sin. They are, nevertheless, imperfections and defects, and often not without sin, at least venial ; wherefore those that aim at perfection ought not to neglect accusing themselves of them. I would not oblige them to do it always, for fear of being too long and scrupulous ; but on solemn feasts I should advise them to be more full and large in declaring things. For other days, let one take here what he shall think most proper for the exciting in himself a sincere and true sorrow, and the discharging of his conscience.

The following regards their former Confessions.

1. That they did not come to this sacrament with such preparation, nor used such care in examining their conscience as they ought to have done.

2. That they have not had so great sorrow and contrition for their faults, nor so true and firm a desire to amend, as they ought to have.

3. That they came not to the most holy communion with all the purity of conscience, respect, and devotion, they should have brought to it; and that after thus having communicated, they continued not in that recollection of mind which the presence of so high a Guest requires.

4. That they have not seriously enough, nor with sufficient zeal, endeavored the amendment of their lives, and daily advancing in our Lord's service; but, on the contrary, have continued in a certain coldness and negligence, unbeseeming Christians; or if, instead of going forward in the way of virtue, they have rather returned to that of vice. They may afterwards enter more particularly into the examination of their faults, and keep the following order:

Against God.

We are obliged, in respect of God, to have in us these three virtues, which are named faith, hope, and charity:—and one may accuse himself in this manner of the defects men usually fall into concerning them. As for charity, examine yourself of not having loved God as you ought, with all your heart and all your soul; and on the contrary, of having too much loved the creatures and vanities of this world, forgetting your Creator for them.

As touching faith, that you have not had so firm a faith as you ought; nor have speedily enough rejected the evil thoughts the devil may have stirred up against it in your understanding.

As for hope, that you have not returned straight to God, nor have had recourse to him in the necessities and troubles of this life, with such confidence as you ought to put in him; on the contrary, that you have been excessively afflicted and discontented, which cannot proceed but from a criminal mistrust of his power and goodness.

As touching the intention, examine yourself, that in the actions

which respect God's service, you have not had all the purity of heart that is requisite, not having done them for his sake alone, but sometimes to comply with decency or custom, sometimes because they have been naturally pleasing to you, or through other the like motives and interests.

Examine yourself also of having been negligent in embracing the good inspirations God has given you, and thereby often resisted the Holy Ghost for fear of enforcing yourself, and taking a little pains. This is a very spiritual, and very secret fault, but such a one as deserves to have great scruple of conscience made of it.

As also, of not having acknowledged God's benefits as you ought; of not having given him thanks enough for them; of not having sufficiently considered and esteemed them, so as to become more zealous in the service of him from whom you received them.

Examine yourself also of having forgotten God, and of having been sometimes in such condition as if he had been quite banished out of your heart; whereas you ought always to walk in his presence, and have him always before your eyes.

Examine yourself also of not having received with patience the troubles and afflictions which God has sent you; of not having acknowledged that they came from his hand for your good, and of not having thanked him for them. This is an important point, and fit to be particularized, if you find in yourself any remorse of conscience concerning it.

You may also, without fear of lying, accuse yourself of not having behaved yourself at holy Mass, at divine service, in consecrated places, and in the presence of the most blessed sacrament, with such respect and devotion as you ought.

Against One's Self.

Man is composed of several parts; of the body with all its senses; of the soul with all its desires; of the spirit with all its faculties, which are the understanding, will, and memory; and so he may have sinned against the right and order which ought to be observed in the use of all these things.

Examine yourself then first, of not having treated your body in eating, drinking, sleeping, clothing, and all other things, with

the rigor and severity you ought: but, on the contrary, of having been too indulgent to it, and too great a lover of yourself.

Of not having kept your imagination and exterior senses within the strict bounds of their duty; of having given them too much liberty; of having suffered them to wander extraordinarily in conversations, and on other things that have diverted your eyes and ears; and so having drawn into your imagination useless and frivolous matters, which have hindered the recollection of your mind and attention in prayer.

Of not having mortified your passions, and tamed your own will as you ought; on the contrary, of having almost continually obeyed it, and always consented to its irregularities; of not having been so humble in your heart and actions as you ought; of not having esteemed yourself so vile and miserable as you are, nor treated yourself as such; of having been slothful and negligent in your prayers; of having often interrupted the course of them on slight occasions; of not having performed them with the attention and recollection you ought.

Against one's Neighbor.

Examine yourself, that you have not, according to God's command, loved your neighbor as you would have others love you.

That you have not in his necessities given him the assistance and relief he might expect from you.

That you have not had such compassion of his miseries, nor prayed so much to God for him as you ought.

That you have not been sufficiently sorrowful for the church's calamities, occasioned by wars, heresies, and other evils that rise up against her; and that you have not recommended her necessities to God as much as you could, and were obliged to do.

If you have superiors, accuse yourself of not having obeyed them and honored them as you ought; and if you have children, servants, or others under your tuition and government, accuse yourself of not having instructed them, chastised them, or provided for them what was necessary; and, in fine, of not having taken so much care of them as you were obliged to do.

Of Sins of Commission.

After you have thus examined yourself of sins of omission, you may examine yourself of those of commission, setting before you,

for this purpose, the ten commandments of God, and the seven deadly sins; and examining your conscience upon them.

In fine, you ought particularly to consider your condition, to weigh the things you are engaged to by it, and examine yourself of all the faults you may have committed against the duties and obligations annexed to it; as, a religious person, of not having well kept his vows or his rule; a judge, of taking bribes; and so of others.

After examining yourself, endeavor to have a true sorrow for these and all other sins that you cannot call to mind, and then proceed to confession; after which you may end with these words, which are ordinarily used in the church: I am heartily sorry for all these sins, and for all other sins into which I have fallen by my thoughts, words, or actions, through my fault, through my fault, through my most grievous fault. I beg pardon of God; and of you, Father, penance and absolution.

END OF THE SECOND BOOK.

A Memorial of a Christian Life.

BOOK III.

ON HOLY COMMUNION.

CHAPTER I.

How we ought to prepare ourselves for it.

HAVING already observed to you the most important things that may dispose you to make a good confession, I come now to what concerns holy communion. Since these two sacraments have such a connexion, that the one ordinarily follows the other, it would be very beneficial, and of great edification to your souls, to treat here of the virtue and wonderful effects of this adorable sacrament; but because there are many things to be said on this subject, and this memorial not permitting me to enter into matters requiring so long a discourse, I shall content myself to entertain you with the preparations necessary for the approaching this divine mystery, since this disposition is of such importance, that the grace given to him who receives the sacrament, will be proportionable to the state in which he shall present

himself to receive it. This sacrament is of an infinite virtue, because it contains in it Jesus Christ whole and entire, who is the fountain of all grace, and also makes us partakers of the fruits and merits of his passion, which is of infinite value ; but he must find souls prepared, and the more excellent the preparation shall be, the greater will the grace be we shall receive. He who goes to the sea to fetch water, takes as much as the vessel he carries along with him can contain. There will be no want of water in the sea, which is an infinite abyss ; but he will have only according to the greatness of his vessel. This is what befalls all those who come to this divine sacrament, which is the sea of all graces, and thus is fulfilled in them what David says : " Open thy mouth wide and I will fill it." *Psalm lxxx. 11.*

It is also a maxim in philosophy, that causes act according to the disposition they find in the matter. The fire burns easily in dry wood, but not in green ; because the one is disposed to receive the heat and flame, and the other is not. And thus, as Jesus Christ, who is the general cause of all graces, is in this sacrament ; so he operates in the souls of those who receive him, conformably to the holy dispositions he finds in them. We daily see these effects, and we know by experience, that they who celebrate the holy sacrifice and communicate often, receive as much benefit by it, as they bring zeal with them to it

But it is not only the hope of enjoying the fruits

of this sacrament that should induce you to prepare yourself well for the reception of it; you ought to fear being rigorously punished if you neglect it. It is a general rule in all the sacraments of the law of grace, that as they are highly profitable to those who receive them worthily, so they are occasions of the greatest evils to those who approach them unworthily. A holy doctor says to this purpose, that as the sun, water and air very much help to make plants grow and fructify, when they are lively and well-rooted; and that, on the contrary, if they are dying and not well-rooted, the same causes make them more speedily wither or rot; so this most blessed sacrament, which operates far more powerfully in grace, than the water, sun, and air do in nature, causes those souls that are vigorous, and in which charity has already taken root, to increase in virtue; as, on the contrary, those that have not these qualifications, instead of profiting by their frequent communions, are more hardened and blinded: not because of the sacrament, which is altogether holy, but by their coming to it ill-prepared. And this effect is wholly agreeable to the nature of this sacrament, which is of itself the spiritual food of souls; for as ordinary meats sustain and nourish the bodies that are in health, and, on the contrary are very prejudicial to those that are sick and filled with bad humors, and in this condition have more need of abstinence than nourishment, the same does this divine sacrament; it gives life, yea true life to some, and occasionally gives death to others, according to their different dispositions.

You will ask me now, what the preparation is which this mystery requires. I advise you to cast your eyes on the works of nature, of which God is the author, as he is of those of grace. You will observe there that the more excellent natural forms are, the greater disposition they require. For example, the food is digested and prepared in the stomach to go to the liver, where it is converted into blood, which is a more noble form, to be carried to the heart; and, in fine, in this place it takes a more requisite one to pass to the brain, where it receives its last perfection. Thus it is purified, and refined, as I may say, in each of these parts, to acquire a better form, and with so just and regular an order, that the perfection of the preceding form is a disposition for that which follows, and that which is the limit and end of the one, serves for a preparation to the other. The same conduct and proportion is found in spiritual things, and particularly in the sacraments, which require so much more preparation in the receivers, as they are of greater excellence and dignity. There are some, the worthy receiving of which requires only to be in the state of grace; but this of which we speak, being the highest and holiest of all, because God himself is present in it, there is another required to serve as a preparation for it, which is actual confession, if the soul finds itself guilty of any mortal sin, or the least doubt of mortal sin. Besides this, there is devotion requisite for the more holy receiving of it; but an effective and not common de-

votion, accompanied with an exceeding reverence of this great mystery, and arising from the consideration of such things as pertain to God. To put ourselves in this state, we must at that time banish from our souls all the imaginations and all the cares of worldly affairs, to the end we may with more liberty, and without hindrance, fix our hearts on God. It is not enough that you be cleansed from all sin, but you must also endeavor to be free from all thoughts, and all sollicitousness, which may put the least obstacle to the attention and devotion it requires of you. And this is wonderfully well represented to us by the solitariness of Moses, when he went up on Mount Sinai to speak with God. He was commanded to go up alone, and that there should not all about the mountain be seen any man or beast, great or small; and God added also to his solitariness, a thick cloud, and darkness, in which Moses was to communicate with him; (*Exod.* xix. 16.) to the end that being to discourse with God, the solitariness and cloud might take from him the sight of all created things. You ought to imitate this solitariness, if you will worthily draw nigh to our Lord. You must go to him with a heart so solitary, so recollected, and so abstracted from earthly things, so elevated, and so absorbed in God, as if at that moment you thought there was none but God and you in the world. Which is again represented by another action of the same prophet, when he put off his shoes to walk on the ground where God made his presence appear;

(*Exod.* xiii. 5,) to let you understand, that when you would go to him, you must strip yourself of all the hurry of perishable and terrestrial things, with which you are usually surrounded.

Such a purity will seem extraordinary, or perhaps impossible, by reason of the corruption of our nature; but it is not impossible to charity or divine grace. "love is strong as death," says the spouse in the *Canticles*; (*Cant.* viii. 6.) to show that as the death of the body makes it become insensible to all worldly things, so perfect charity in such manner possesses the heart of man, and raises it up to God, as to make it forget all other things.

It is true, this spiritual death, and this so general disengagement is not given to all; it is a particular privilege of the spouse; (that is, of those holy souls which deserve to be called by that name;) the church, nevertheless, proposes it to all, because of the dignity of this sacrament, which, being the bread of angels, requires the purity of angels in those who eat of it. It is your part then to employ all your endeavors to obtain it; God will be contented with the share you can have in it; and if you, on your part, do all that lies in you to forget all things at the time of communion, and to approach it with attention and a sincere and actual devotion, you have every reason to hope well of the divine mercy. I believe, nevertheless, it will be very fit to let you understand things more particularly; and if you desire to present yourself at this holy table in the condition

you ought, spare nothing to adorn your souls with the richest ornaments, which consist in the qualities I am going to explain to you.

CHAPTER II.

Of the first thing necessary for Communicating well, which is, Purity of Conscience.

KNOW first, that every good disposition comes from heaven, and acknowledge with profound humility, that all the cares of men and angels are not able to give so perfect a preparation as is necessary to communicate well, unless God's hand intervenes, and he particularly grants you his assistance. For as none can dispose himself to receive any increase of grace without the help of grace, so none can prepare himself to receive God as he ought, unless God himself vouchsafe to prepare him. Address, yourself, therefore, to him with a contrite and humble heart, and with fervent desires, that he would be pleased to cleanse and adorn the house in which he condescends to lodge. When a king, making his progress through the country, is obliged to stay in some poor village, he expects not the inhabitants should prepare his lodging for him, because he knows their poverty is unable to do it; but he himself sends before-hand his furniture, with officers to see that he be lodged and provided for comfortably to his greatness. If kings act in this manner, you will have rea-

son to beseech our Lord, who is "King of Kings, and Lord of Lords," (*Apoc.* xix. 16.) that since he is pleased to do you this incomparable favor, to lodge in so poor a place as your breast, he will send before him his Holy Spirit, with all his gifts and ornaments, that by this means the grace of God and his almighty power, may prepare the house into which his goodness disdains not to enter.

This being done, brethren, the first disposition for communicating well, is purity of conscience ; that is, that we be clean and exempt from all mortal sin. "I will wash my hands," says David, "among the innocent: and will compass thy altar, O Lord." *Psalms* xxv. 6. He promises God to wash his hands, that is, the filthiness of his sins ; and afterwards proposes to approach the altar, that is, the table of our Lord. And it is for this reason the apostle uses these so terrible threats, speaking to the Corinthians : "Whosoever shall eat this bread, or drink the chalice of the Lord unworthily, he shall be guilty of the body and of the blood of the Lord." *1 Cor.* xi. 27. To teach us by these words, that they who approach this mystery with a polluted conscience, commit as detestable an offence as that of the Jews, who crucified Jesus Christ, since both the one and the other horribly outrage his body and blood, though in a different manner.

But moreover, how can Jesus Christ be joined with sin ? and what can be the event of putting together two things so contrary and opposite, but the de-

struction of both? Things which are of the same nature are easily joined, as water with water, and iron with iron; but two contrary things, as fire and water, cannot suffer one another, and the weaker must give way to the stronger. Since, then, by receiving this sacrament you join yourself with Jesus Christ, what can you expect from this union, but the ruin of the weaker part? How can goodness subsist with wickedness, purity with filth, humility with pride, meekness with wrath, and cruelty with clemency? So it is when there is an intent of approaching Christ; for to be worthy of this divine union, Christians must in some sort resemble him, and this is what sin absolutely hinders, when it is not cleansed by penance.

All the sins that are called mortal make this dreadful divorce. But there are two more dangerous than the rest, and which have a more formal opposition to the qualities of this sacrament; to wit, hatred and impurity. As to the first, the eucharist is a sacrament of love and union, since all the faithful find in it one and the same nourishment, and one and the same spirit, which render it one and the same thing by love. This is what St. Augustin would signify to us when he said, that "our Lord would leave us his body and blood in things which, being composed of several parts wholly separate from each other, are drawn together, and reduced into one sole body, as are bread and wine, of which the one is made of several grapes, and the other of several

grains of corn :” to teach us that this sacrament, which is given us under these two species, produces the same thing in those who receive it, making in them one only heart of many hearts, by the communication of one and the same spirit. Now if this be true, as it cannot be doubted, can any thing be imagined more unreasonable, than to come to a sacrament of love and union with a heart separated from that of one’s brother? Would not this be the same thing as desiring a surgeon to close a wound for us, and doing on our side all we can to keep it open? And would it not be an absolute want of judgment to take this spiritual medicine, the effect of which is to cure the wounds of ill-will, and unite divided hearts, if one were in a firm resolution to renounce this grace, and break at the same time, by dissensions and quarrels, the peace and union it ought to cause?

If you desire then to avoid this inconvenience, never have the boldness to approach this table without a strong determination to put in effect what our Lord ordains us, when he says, “ If thou offer thy gift at the altar, and there thou remember that thy brother hath any thing against thee, leave there thy offering before the altar, and go first and be reconciled to thy brother, and then coming thou shalt offer thy gift.” *Matt. v. 23, 24.* It is with this satisfaction, which the confessor will well regulate, and with as firm a resolution, that you ought to come to this heavenly table. If you present yourself there

without this preparation, you can expect nothing else but that the master of the feast will say to you, "Friend, how camest thou in hither, not having on a wedding-garment?" (*Matt.* xxii. 12.) that is, being without charity, which, as the apostle says, "covereth a multitude of sins." 1 *Pet.* iv. 8. And you have great reason to fear that, having nothing to answer to this objection, our Lord will pronounce against you that severe sentence, "Let him be bound hand and foot, and cast into the fire."

The other sin, which is no less contrary to the grace of the sacrament, is impurity: for this sacrament, which contains the most holy flesh of our Saviour, formed of the substance of the chastest and purest of all virgins, demands so great a purity of body and mind, that the saints have believed a nocturnal illusion, caused by the devil in a dream, was a sufficient cause to abstain unless obedience, or the solemnity of some special feast, obliged a man to do otherwise; or except after this accident he found himself no less full of devotion and zeal to communicate, than if it had not happened. St. Bernard counsels in this case, even not to serve at the holy Mass, so much purity does he judge this divine mystery to require. For if St. Paul advised married persons to abstain sometimes from the lawful use of the marriage-bed, that they might more devoutly apply themselves to prayer, (1 *Cor.* vii. 5.) how much more ought they to be chaste, who, by the participating in the holy sacrament, receive God into their

bodies? And if in the old law one unchaste dream caused him to whom this dream happened, to be excluded for a whole day from the tents and company of God's people, (*Deut. xxii. 10.*) with how much more reason ought it to separate us from so strict a communication with God himself?

But it is not only requisite that you be not defiled with any mortal sin when you approach this table, but you ought also to be exceedingly careful to cleanse yourself from venial sins; for though it be true, that sins of this nature do not wholly quench the fire of charity, it is, notwithstanding, certain that they diminish the fervor of devotion, which is the first disposition this divine mystery requires. Confess then before communion, to cleanse yourself of this sort of offences; conceive at least for them all the horror and all the repentance you ought; or enter into some pious exercises, to recover by this means the actual devotion which venial sin had made you lose. Those that fail to do some one of these things cannot be excused from a criminal negligence, which is a very considerable venial sin, and will undoubtedly make them lose much of the fruit and comforts of this sacrament, which is an effect they ordinarily feel who approach it with this preparation, But as for those who have sinned mortally, besides the sincere repentance with which their soul must be touched, there is required actual confession on pain of a new mortal sin, as the council of Trent hath expressly defined.

CHAPTER III.

Of the second thing necessary for Communicating well, which is, Purity of Intention.

THE second thing which is necessary to communicate worthily, is purity of intention ; that is, to do this great action for the end for which it ought to be done. For as the end is the principal circumstance of all our works, so it is that which we ought principally to consider in them, especially in this, which is of far greater importance than all others, lest we pervert God's designs, and use that for one end which he has instituted for another. This doctrine is of consequence, and that it may be the better understood, it will be necessary to declare the different ends to which those have respect who communicate worthily, and those who communicate unworthily ; for so that which you ought to aim at, will be more easily known.

If any priest were so unhappy as to be moved principally to celebrate Mass for the sake of the temporal profit he might expect to receive by it, let him remember the two sons of Aaron, who offered sacrifice to God with strange fire ; (*Lev. x. 1.*) since it is not the fire of divine love that would induce him to do his duty, but the heat of covetousness and filthy gain. Such should have great reason to dread the punishment that befel those sacrilegious wretches, who were in a moment devoured by the fire which came forth of the sanctuary. There are some lay-

persons, who come to communion only for fear of punishment, as many wicked Christians who never approach our Lord's table but at Easter, and that with as much repugnance as if they were going to be put to death. Those ought to consider, that as none entered into the feast of king Assuerus with base and unseemly apparel, (*Esth.* iv. 2.) so they, by these base and servile dispositions, render themselves unworthy of this heavenly food: what was instituted through love, ought to be taken with love, and it is unreasonable to receive with the spirit of a slave, a present which God makes us with the goodness of a father. There are some that communicate to be like others, though they find not in themselves any hunger after this divine nourishment, nor know what it is to amend their lives, or bring to so holy an action the necessary preparations; and others (whom I place almost in the same rank) communicate only through custom. They have prescribed themselves certain set days of coming to the altar, at which they will not fail; and this alone makes all their devotion. They certainly deceive themselves, and if they were truly devout they would consider, that though this is a good custom, it is not yet good to communicate only for custom-sake, but that there are other dispositions requisite, without which the fruits of communion are not received. There are others, in fine, who come to communicate, thinking to find in it some spiritual gust, and to seek in the sacrament some sensible devotion: this is the utmost end they

propose, and in this their devotion is false, because it looks not to the end it ought to aim at, which is to embrace the cross and mortification of Jesus Christ, and to make them more fervent and ready in serving God.

None of these motives are direct; they are by-ways and false doors, by which they rather steal as thieves, than receive as faithful servants, their master's favors. Let us enter then by the doors by which the saints have entered, and let us endeavor to conform ourselves to the intentions they had, which were not all of the same sort, as St. Bonaventure teaches us in these words: "The intentions of those who communicate are different and numerous: some are induced to it by the love of God alone, that they may oftener draw their Beloved into the bottom of their souls, to enjoy him, comfort themselves with him, and become inflamed with his love. Others are excited to it by the knowledge they have of their own weakness, and seek to be cured of their infirmities by the assistance of this heavenly Physician; others are touched with the remembrance of their sins, and hope by this great sacrifice, and by this saving Host, to obtain pardon of them; others, seeing themselves pressed with some temptation, or some extraordinary affliction, have recourse to this sacrament that, by the power of the Almighty, they may be delivered from their troubles, and defended from their enemy: others desire some particular grace, and address themselves to this dear Son, to

whom his Father can refuse nothing, for the obtaining of their request; others burn with a zeal of testifying to God their acknowledgment of his benefits, and they offer him this same Son who is given them, knowing that they cannot present him any thing more agreeable than this cup of blessing which he has communicated to us; others have a design to praise God in his saints, since we cannot of ourselves more worthily honor them, than by offering to God this sacrifice of praise in remembrance of them. Others, in fine, celebrate and communicate, being induced to it through an earnest desire of their neighbor's salvation, or by the compassion they have of their brethren's adversities, being assured that there is nothing so efficaciously pleads the cause of the miserable, or so powerfully intercedes before the face of the Father for the living and the dead, as the precious blood of his Son, which he has shed both for the one and the other."

In this manner does this illuminated doctor show us the most part of the good intentions we can have. Choose that which shall most affect you, and make it, if you please, the object of your devotion. But I counsel you something greater, and more worthy of a Christian zeal. Stay not upon one alone, consider them all as the admirable fruits of the holy sacrament, and propose to yourself, with the assistance of your divine Physician, the obtaining of them all. Know nevertheless, that your principal end, and the most proper to this divine mystery, is to procure that

by receiving Jesus Christ, who is concealed in it, you may receive into your souls his spirit, by which you may be transformed into him, and brought to live as he did; that is, with the charity, humility, patience, obedience, poverty of spirit, mortification of the flesh, and contempt of this world, which appeared in him. It is thus we spiritually eat and drink Jesus, by changing ourselves into him, and making ourselves one and the same thing with him, through the imitation of his life, as he did who said, "I live now, not I, but Christ liveth in me." *Gal. ii. 20.* See what ought to be our principal end, joined with doing that which he commanded us, which is to renew at our communication the memory of his death, and give him infinite thanks for the inestimable benefit of our redemption.

CHAPTER IV.

Of the third thing necessary for Communicating well, which is, Actual Devotion.

THE third disposition which holy communion requires, is actual devotion; and the better to understand this, you must know that this sacrament, as well as the rest, has one effect common, and another proper to itself; the common is to give grace, as all the other sacraments of the law of grace do; but that which is particular to this, is a new strength,

and new vigor in doing good works, and a new relish of heavenly things, mixed with a great sweetness, experienced by those who receive it. For as the corporal food we take has not only the property to preserve our lives, but, together with the pleasure we have in eating, gives us also strength and liveliness; so this divine food not only maintains our spiritual life with the grace it gives us, but fortifies also the spirit, and makes us feel inexplicable delight, through a sacred virtue which accompanies it. St. Thomas says, that "this sweetness is so great in those whom the Holy Ghost has purified, whose souls know how to relish true pleasures, that no words are sufficient to express." 3 *Par.* q. 79. *art.* 1 & 2. Nor is it to be doubted, since spiritual delights are found there in their source, which is our Lord Jesus Christ.

For the enjoyment then of this great benefit, actual devotion is required; for since there must be some proportion between the form and that which serves as a disposition and preparative to the form, there is nothing so advantageous for the augmenting devotion, as devotion itself: as we see by experience in wood, which, the hotter and drier it is, is so much the fitter to burn, because heat and dryness are the two qualities of fire.

But if you ask me what actual devotion is, I can no way better explain it to you, than by telling you, that it is like artificial water, which being extracted out of divers flowers, retains something of all their

savors. For this devotion is an ardent and affectionate motion of the soul, composed of several holy desires, and divers spiritual affections, of which it is full when it comes to this sacrament. St. Ambrose declares then, when preparing himself for Mass, he makes his address to Jesus Christ in these words: "What ought, O Lord, to be my contrition, my sorrow for my faults, the fountain of my tears! What ought, in fine, to be the reverence, fear, chastity of body, and purity of mind, which I am obliged to bring to thy altar, when I am going to celebrate this divine mystery, where thy flesh is truly eaten, and thy blood truly drunk; where the lowest things are joined with the highest, where the angels are present, and where thou thyself art, after an unspeakable manner, both the priest and sacrifice! Who, O Lord, can worthily perform this mystery, except thou renderest him worthy?" In fine, to approach this adorable sacrament with the devotion of which I speak, and to correspond on your part, as much as your weakness can admit, with its holiness and dignity, bring always to it a very great respect, a profound humility, much love and confidence; but, above all, assure yourself, that you will be so much the more worthy this heavenly bread, as you shall be more hungry, and desirous to be satisfied with it. The excellence of this sacred food requires no less than all the several affections, and for the making them spring up in your heart, the considerations I

am going to set before you, will not perhaps be unprofitable.

SECTION I.

IN the first place, to obtain fear and respect, consider the greatness of him who is enclosed in this sacrament; for under this sacred veil is concealed his Divine Majesty, who created the world, who preserves and governs it; in whose presence the pillars of heaven tremble; before whom all nature lies prostrate (*Job* xxvi. 11.); whom the stars of heaven incessantly praise (*Ibid* xxxviii. 7.); whose immutability appears in the wonderful revolutions of the sun and moon; in whose sight the celestial spirits themselves are not without spot; in comparison of whom, this vast frame of the world which appears so wonderful, is, to use the Wise Man's words, "but like a drop of morning dew, or the least grain of the balance." *Ibid* iv. And after this, can you avoid being seized with awe and reverence, seeing with the eyes of faith so majestic a greatness abase itself to you?

I might here add something concerning the severity of his justice, the depths of his judgments, with the horror he has of wicked men and their wickedness; but I am contented only to represent to you what you owe to this Sovereign Majesty, and to show not sinners alone, but even the just themselves, what great reason they have to fear when they approach it. No man ought to flatter himself on this occasion, or vainly think himself secure, because of the virtue

of this sacrament, which is the life of souls. It is true, that it gives life, but it is no less true, that it gives also death to those who profane it by approaching it unprepared. The children of Israel being at the point to give battle to the Philistines, sent for the ark into their army, hoping by the presence thereof, to gain the victory over their enemies: but the success was quite different from their expectation; for this sacred pledge was so far from rendering them victorious, that, on the contrary, they lost the battle; all God's people were defeated, the ark was taken, and carried away by the infidels; so that it seemed to have come into the camp only to render their loss the greater. They believed that the ark would be their preservation, and it was their ruin. The same thing befel that great favorite of Assuerus, named Aman. *Esther* vii. Queen Esther invited him to the banquet she had prepared for the king; this the proud man esteemed a mark of favor; but he foresaw not that his death would be the conclusion of his banquet, and that from the table he should be sent to execution. Wherefore the apostle, speaking to the faithful, cries out, and says to them, "Let a man prove himself, and let him eat of that bread, and drink of the chalice: for he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh judgment to himself, not discerning the body of the Lord." 1 *Cor.* xi. 28, 29. If, then, so great respect was required to the ark of the Old Testament, which was but the figure of this divine sacrament, there must, without doubt,

be incomparably more purity and reverence due to the sacrament itself, in which God personally resides. The Bethsamites heretofore looked with curiosity into the ark, and fifty thousand of them died to expiate that offence. *1 Kings* vi. 19. What then shall become of those who presume to receive irreverently what this ark did but represent? When this ark opened a passage to the Israelites through the waters of Jordan, Joshua commanded them not to come near it, but to leave always at least the distance of two thousand cubits between the ark and the people, for fear God should slay them. *Josh.* iii. 4. If Joshua treated in this manner the ark of the Lord, what must we do to receive in us the Lord of the ark? Ought not this terrify you, if, through a serious reflection on yourself, you consider that you are by nature nothing, and by sin less than nothing, since sin is less than nothing? But those particularly ought to tremble, who having so often, as the prophet speaks, reduced themselves to nothing by their sins against God, dare lodge him in a heart which has been the nest of serpents and basilisks.

Humble yourself then as much as you can by these considerations, and come to your Father's house with tears in your eyes, and sorrow in your heart, saying with the prodigal child, "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee: I am not worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants." *Luke* xv. 18, 19. Put yourself in the condition of the publican in the gospel, who durst not

approach the altar, nor lift up his eyes to heaven ; and smiting your breast, say with him, "O God ! be merciful to me a sinner ;" (*Luke* xviii. 13.) or like the woman of Canaan, who said to our Saviour, "Yea, Lord, for the whelps also eat of the crumbs which fall from the table of their masters." *Matt.* xv. 27.

SECTION II.

THESE are the considerations which may excite in your soul some part of the respect you owe to this divine sacrament ; but since it is reasonable you bring also to it no less love and confidence, in order to obtain them, consider on the other side, that as much hatred as this Lord of Majesty and Justice has for sin, so much goodness and mercy he has for sinners. These were the divine qualities that brought him down from heaven, and clothed him with our flesh, that made him undertake so many journeys to seek for sinners, that made him resolve to eat with them, and obliged him to say, that their salvation was his food and his delight. It was for them he fasted, travelled up and down on foot, watched, rose up early, and suffered innumerable contradictions and persecutions from the world. It was for their sakes he spent whole days in preaching, and nights in prayer for their necessities ; it was for them that the gates of his mercy were always open, and that he never repelled any of those who addressed themselves to him, though they were rejected by others. In fine,

he was pressed with so violent a desire to save them, and remedy their evils, that, to redeem and cure them, he consented to be fastened to a cross between two thieves, and to shed for them even the last drop of his blood. Does not it seem impossible to you for this goodness to proceed any farther? But our Saviour would extend it beyond his life. Departing out of this world he left us another remedy, and another refuge, by the institution of this most august sacrament, in which he himself is present: by this means you touch him, you possess him, and enjoy the benefits which his power produces; and thence you daily experience that the same cause which obliged him to die, obliged him also to institute this sacrament; for as his love alone made him resolve to come down from heaven, and deliver himself into the hands of sinners: so the same love makes him continually give himself to the world by this divine invention, and often to sinners as guilty as those that deprived him of his life.

It is then very clear that the cause of this great work could on his side be nothing but his immense charity; and on ours, but our extreme necessities; on our part only our misery and on his only mercy. And thus we see, that this divine sacrament is the common remedy of the just and of sinners; that it is not only food for the healthy, but medicine also for the sick; that it is not only the life of the living, but the resurrection likewise of the dead. And according to St. Augustin, this heavenly bread not only

sustains those who live, but sometimes also raises again those that have lost their life.

Who then can forbid you the participation of this mystery? It is an hospital which the divine mercy has erected with royal magnificence, endowed and founded with the purest blood of Jesus Christ, for the relief of all that are sick. Will you then think yourselves excluded because you are infirm and miserable? On the contrary, you ought for this reason to have recourse to it. If you are afflicted with any great disease, it is there you will be cured; if you are weak, you will there obtain strength; if you are blind, you will there receive sight; if you are poor, you will there find riches; if you are hungry, you will there be satisfied; and, in fine, if you are naked, and bare of the graces and virtues that are necessary for you, you will there again be clothed with them.

Some who do not sufficiently prize this divine sacrament, and either know not, or will not know its nature and condition, keep themselves and others from it on frivolous pretences of their infirmities and weaknesses; but they must understand, that it was instituted not only to serve for nourishment for those who are in health, but for medicine also to those that are sick; not only to comfort and strengthen the just, but to give confidence also and health to penitents. Those who find themselves most depressed have greatest need of it; and consequently the weak can much less subsist without it than the strong

Those whose souls are sound and vigorous, may for a time persist in good without this particular assistance; but what can they do without it, who have their soul always as it were on the edge of their lips; who are so weak and void of strength, that if they turn their eyes but ever so little from God, they see themselves ready to fall and perish? It was of these persons particularly that our Saviour had compassion, when speaking in a figure of great mystery he said, "If I send them away fasting to their homes, they will faint by the way; for some of them come from far off." *Mark* viii. 3. For, as on that occasion, those hearers of Jesus Christ who came from the remotest places, must have been in more apparent danger of fainting than those who had not undergone the toil of so long a journey; so in the course of this life, the weakest, and those which have farthest to travel, that they may arrive at the perfection of divine love are, without doubt, exposed to more pressing dangers. And since this living bread was ordained from heaven to support the weak, it is not a rashness, but a holy and wholesome resolution for the sick to have recourse to the Physician, and receive from his goodness the remedy he has prepared for him with so much love by the effusion of all his blood.

For my part, I am firmly persuaded that one of the greatest faults men can commit, and of which they shall render the most rigorous account at the day of judgment, will be that which they commit

against the blood of Jesus Christ, in not making use of the admirable remedies that are found in his Church by the merit of his precious blood, of which the eucharist is undoubtedly the greatest. If a king had built a magnificent hospital for the reception of all sick persons, and had furnished it with all things necessary for the curing of their diseases, and after he had with abundance of care and charge finished this great work, there should not any one be found that would come thither to be cured, would not this prince think himself very ill treated, in having bestowed his labor for such slothful souls, so negligent of their own health? Doubt not but the King of Heaven will conceive the same indignation, if, having presented us with a remedy which cost him so dear, and which he has compounded of his own blood, he shall see us neglect it, and so, as much as in us lies, frustrate his designs, and render all his pains unprofitable. Doubt not but this contempt will make you fall into a sin like that which our Lord described in the parable of the feast, to which the guests that were invited refused to come, and fear his pronouncing against you that terrible sentence of excommunication, "But I say unto you, that none of those men that were invited shall taste of my supper." *Luke* xiv. 24.

What reason can you allege that may be sufficient to excuse you? If you say that you are sinners, know you not that you cease to be so when you begin to love justice, and to be sorry for your offences?

And know you not, that as St. Jerome expresses it, past sins damn you not if they are no longer pleasing? If you say that you are fallen, and that your fall is irrecoverable, assure yourselves it will not be so if you are troubled for your misfortune, and stretch out your hand to be raised up again. You have little reason, if you say that you find yourselves unworthy to approach so high a mystery. Do you believe that there is any one truly worthy? and would not our Saviour, therefore, communicate himself to the little ones and imperfect, that his tenderness and love might thereby have greater lustre? Thus, you see, you are so far from offending God by coming to him, that you would highly offend him by refusing to make use of a remedy which he has ordained for such as you are. These are the principal considerations with which you may stir up in your soul the ardent desire you ought to have, that you may with profit be partaker of this great mystery.

SECTION III.

BUT there is a third disposition requisite for the approaching to this holy table, which is an ardent desire and great hunger for this heavenly bread; and for the obtaining it there is no better means than to consider the effects of this divine sacrament, and the affections it excites in those souls which receive it devoutly. For your instruction in this important point, you ought to know, that as God by his goodness has opposed to the first man, who was

the cause of all our evils, a second man, to wit, Jesus Christ, who is the original of all our good ; so to the fatal fruit of that forbidden tree which destroyed us, he has opposed a heavenly food in this sacrament, which serves for a remedy to all our miseries. And as “ by the obedience of the one, many shall be made just ;” (*Rom.* v. 19.) so all the evils which that poisoned meat had caused in us, have happily found their cure in this august sacrament. This then is a sovereign antidote, which the divine wisdom has provided to deliver all men from the poison with which the old serpent had infected them. And, therefore, to comprehend the abundance of the benefits which are liberally communicated to us by this saving food, we need only compute the calamities which that other fatal meat had brought upon us, and be fully sensible that God has changed his curse into a blessing ; since, speaking of that first fruit, he said, “ In what day soever thou shalt eat of it, thou shalt die ;” (*Gen.* ii. 17.) and of the second, “ He that shall eat of this bread shall live for ever.” Another means is, attentively to meditate on what it contains : for the flesh of Jesus Christ is really there, which being united to the divine word, is partaker of all its advantages, as a red hot iron partakes of all the properties of the fire that heats it. This made St. John Damascen say, that “ the Word of the eternal God, which gives life to all things, being united to human flesh, makes that flesh also give life :” and this it is which leaves us no room to

doubt, but that this sacrament contains all the virtue which is in Jesus Christ, since that in it is received the flesh of Jesus Christ, which, being united to his divinity, enjoys all the greatness and all the power of it.

Admire then what is wrought in you when this divine Lord comes to you; consider, that he comes to honor you with his presence, to pour on you the ointment of his grace, to cure you by his mercy, to wash you with his blood, to raise you by his death, to illuminate you with his light, to warm you with his love, to comfort you with his delights, to unite himself to your soul, and become her bridegroom, to render you a partaker of his spirit, and of all that he purchased for you on the cross, by offering up that precious blood which he gives you. Know, that by this divine sacrament your past sins are pardoned, you are strengthened against those that are to come, your passions are weakened, your temptations are diminished, your devotion is awakened, your faith receives new light, and your charity new heat; your hope is augmented, your weakness is supported, your strength is repaired, your conscience is filled with joy, you are made partaker of Jesus Christ's merits, and receive pledges of eternal life. It is this bread that gives courage to the weak, that entertains the traveller, that eases those who are fallen, that animates the fearful, that gives arms to the valiant, that rejoices the sorrowful, that comforts the afflicted, that instructs the ignorant, that heats the lukewarm, that

awakens the sluggard, that cures the sick, and that being the most common, is also the most assured remedy for all your necessities. Since, then, this adorable sacrament produces such wonderful effects, and since the love of him that gives it to us, is so excessive, who will not desire such great riches, and who will not hunger for so excellent a food?

Let not, then, the consideration of your vileness and unworthiness keep you back from this sacred table, for though this sacrament is infinitely majestic and holy, you ought, nevertheless, to remember, that this treasure was discovered for the poor; that this medicine was ordained for the sick; that this relief was prepared for the necessitous, and this great feast provided for the hungry. This sacrament is the bread of angels, but it is also the bread of penitents; it is the nourishment of the healthy, but it is also the remedy of the infirm: it is the feast of kings, but it is also the food of the populace: it is the strong meat of men, but it is also the milk of children. Thus it is all things to all men; and none, how imperfect soever he is, ought to abstain from this divine medicine, if he desire to be cured. "They that are in health need not a physician, but they that are ill." *Matt. ix. 12.* And if Jesus Christ came principally into the world for these, it is also particularly for these that he gives himself in this sacrament. See, then, by this, with what hunger, with what desires, and with what joy you ought to sigh after him who comes to heap on you so many favors

Remember the longing of the ancient patriarchs for the coming of him whom you receive. Remember how they pierced the heavens with their cries, requesting aloud, that he would be pleased to come down; and for this reason called him "The desired of all nations." *Ag. ii. 7.* He who comes into your soul, is the same that came into the world, and he came to do nothing else there, but what he did for all the world. When he came into the world, he gave the world the life of grace. He comes likewise into your soul only to give it the same life. This being so, why will you not desire him with as much fervor as the prophets did? Consider the zeal with which the apostles expected the coming of the Holy Ghost, the earnest prayers and fervent sighs with which they requested him. You ought to send up no less towards heaven for the obtaining Jesus Christ's presence, since you receive by it the Holy Ghost, though in a different manner.

CHAPTER V

That Time ought to be taken for the putting one's self in all these Dispositions.

To prepare yourself, then, in this manner, you ought to take some days before communion, in which, freeing your mind from all other thoughts, you may both reflect at leisure on all these considerations, and also cleanse your conscience by a serious examina-

tion, true contrition, and sacramental confession of your sins: also some time should be allowed for prayer, as a previous preparation. Let those whose duty it is to offer daily the holy sacrifice, not follow the example of some who, from vain and unprofitable discourses, from immoderate laughter, from the throng of secular affairs, pass immediately (full of distractions) to the altar, and make no scruple of coming to our Lord's table to eat the bread of angels, with the same disposition and indifference as if they were eating a bit of common bread; which is an intolerable irreverence. We need seek no other cause of their little progress in virtue, after their having so many years used this divine medicine: for if they had, at every Mass they celebrate, received some increase of grace, as it happens to those who are worthily disposed for it, they would have stored up in themselves a treasure of graces; whereas we now see them still the same, and after twenty years serving at the altar, they continue as sensual as they were, and sometimes worse. How lamentable is this misfortune! Can we see any thing more to be feared than to come every day to the fountain of life, to the banquet of angels, to the sovereign remedy of all our evils, and having persisted thus a long time, to be found at last as dry, as insensible, and with as much weakness as at first? These unfaithful ministers of our Lord are exceedingly to blame; but there is an infinite number of evil Christians that deserve no less reprehension, who, after they have abandoned

themselves to all manner of vices, come once a year to confession, and having scarce ended their vomit of innumerable abominations, go incontinently from the priest's feet to take their place at our Lord's table, and there eat the bread of angels, which, if it were possible for us, we should receive only with angelical purity. Were it not fit, to employ first some days pacifying God, and in watering and washing with tears the place in which he is to be lodged? Were it not reasonable to dispose ourselves by a vigil of labor and sorrow for the joy of so great a festival, and not to solemnize it without a great deal of preparation? When the time was come in which God would give the law to his people, Moses commanded them to prepare themselves three days before, to wash their clothes, and abstain from the company of their wives. *Exod. xix. 10, 11.* None can doubt but we are obliged to do much more for the receiving God himself, who gives us not only his law but his grace, which is far more than his law; and do we not fear, having our imagination wholly filled with our sins, being yet wholly defiled and polluted with our filthiness, to approach a mystery of so great purity, and receive a Lord whose majesty is so high and elevated?

This is a great abuse, and no less dangerous for being common: it is of importance to consider it well, and to weigh it as it deserves, not with the weight of Cannan, which is false, but with the weight of the sanctuary; that is, according to the judgment

of God and the sentiments of the saints. Let those who desire to perform their duty, read St. Cyprian's sermon against the Christians that fell into idolatry, and they shall see how vehemently this father reprehends this contempt and boldness. Speaking of some believers, who in a short time after their sacrificing to idols, presented themselves to the holy communion, he says thus: "Returning from the altars of the devil, having their hands still polluted with these infamous sacrifices, they approach the holy sacrament. And though it was written, that none should be so presumptuous as to eat of this meat unless he be clean and pure, for that otherwise it will cause his death; yet are they audacious enough to receive our Lord's body, not having digested the flesh that was offered to idols, but having their mouths still stinking of that abominable food; in which I may say their hands and mouth commit a more detestable sin, than that into which they fell, when they renounced his worship and religion." These are the words of St. Cyprian. Consider whether he could have expressed himself in more forcible terms. You may judge by the discourse of this saint, what he would have said of the profanations which daily happen in the use of our most divine mystery.

You may well tell, that these sinners are reconciled to God by confession: I suppose it; but though they may be truly restored to Jesus Christ's favor, is it fit they should receive him at the same instant, and with the same mouth that is just come from vomit-

ing forth so much filthiness, without employing some time to bewail their sins, and cleanse their consciences, that they may approach him with greater purity? Mary, sister of Moses, remained seven days without entering into the camp of God's people, though she had repented of her fault, and was pardoned. *Num. xii. 14.* Absalom, the son of David, was banished three years from his father's palace, though he had forgiven him the murder committed on the person of his brother Amnon. *2 Kings xiii. 33.* Now if this prince, after his being assured of his father's favor, was obliged in some sort to expiate his crime by a three years' absence, would any injury be done to these criminals by deferring for three days their admission to the communion, after having so cruelly offended their heavenly Father, and so often, by their sins, murdered and crucified his only-begotten Son?

You will tell me again, there are some so frail that they cannot even for so short a time, forbear offending God, and that it is therefore better to admit them speedily to the holy table, for fear they render themselves unworthy by new faults. I answer this, that if these are venial sins, they exclude them not from this grace, since, as the Scripture says, "the just man falleth seven times a day;" (*Prov. xxiv. 16.*) and it is not hard to apply a remedy to this evil. But if you speak of mortal sins, and believe them not capable to abstain from them for so short a time, what danger can be imagined more strange than this, and

what disposition more abominable, than to dare communicate with so wavering and corrupt a conscience, that one cannot promise himself to pass three days without sinning mortally? And where is then that firm purpose which ought to be engraven in the souls of Christians, never to offend God, though for the preservation of life itself? Where is the love of God, which fears sin above all things? Banish from your minds this dangerous apprehension. The strength of grace is not so little, nor will you so easily fall into mortal sins, if you, on your side, use some moderate care to avoid this misfortune. God will grant you the grace to preserve you from them, not only for some days, but also for whole years, and even for all your life if you invoke his assistance; and he never refuses it to those that seek it. It is true, that to oblige carnal and sensual men to abstain from evil, though for so short a time, is like the turning of a great river out of its natural current, which it has kept for many ages. Whatever industry you use to drain it from its ancient channel, at the first gap it finds it breaks through all its ditches and banks, and returns with violence to the place where it was wont to have its course: it is the same with these old sinners; they have for so many years been accustomed to live in a miserable libertinism of saying and doing whatever comes into their fancy, and of letting their hearts go with so much license after all their desires, that to exhort them to change their life and persuade them to resist the motions of their

passions, is to give them so intolerable a pain, that no time seems short enough for them till they get out of this constraint, and return to their first disorders. We see by the effect, that the true cause which makes them go with so much haste to communion, is the secret torment they feel to see themselves reduced to a necessity of being good for only two or three days, such deep roots has their wickedness taken in their hearts. Wretches that you are ! how can you enter into this false presumption of being saved, and of becoming companions of those who fight faithfully, if you are become so hardened and so slothful that you will not put on the armor of the Christian warfare ? But know, as the apostle says, that none shall "be crowned, except he strive lawfully;" (2 *Tim.* ii. 5.) and do not imagine, that what I now say to you is contrary to what I have represented to you, concerning the confidence with which we ought to approach this mystery. What I said in that place was to give courage to weak and timorous souls who, through indiscreet fears, abstain from this sacrament ; and what I now say to you is, to retain the rash within the bounds of their duty ; not on any design to deprive them of this sovereign remedy, but to the end they may come to it with the necessary purity and preparation.

CHAPTER VI.

What ought to be done before Communicating.

IF you desire then to do this important action as you ought, take some time to dispose yourself for it; and to say something more particular for those who oftener frequent this divine sacrament, my opinion is, that as Moses commanded the children of Israel to employ three days in preparing themselves to receive God's law, (*Exod. xix. 10, 11.*) so you should take the same time to put yourself in a state to receive this great Majesty, which comes to give you not a law of death, but a law of life; a law which not only represents to you his characters, but fills you with his spirit; a law of love, and not of fear. The Scripture gives us an example which ought to fill us with great confusion; it says, that the wives of king Assuerus employed a whole year in adorning and preparing themselves to appear only once in the presence of that prince. (*Esther ii. 12.*) If these women spent so much time to render themselves agreeable to the eyes of a mortal man, what ought not you to do for obtaining the favor of the King of Heaven! One of the greatest praises which the angel gave the Blessed Virgin was to tell her that she had found favor in the sight of God. (*Luke v. 30.*) Wherefore then should not we take as much care to render ourselves pleasing to God, as those women did for that vanity? Ought not our whole life to be a continual preparation to render us wor-

thy of the most signal of all favors, by communicating worthily ?

I know well that, morally speaking, you will not attain to this perfection ; but do, at least, something to dispose yourself for so great and so awful a mystery. Do, on your part, seriously all that may depend on you ; and if you ask me what that is, I will tell you, first, that you ought to have your eyes more watchful over yourself ; that you ought more attentively to consider all your actions, and all your words ; and you ought to take very great care not to slip into anything that may offend God's goodness, not only mortally, but even venially, if it be possible. I tell you, moreover, that you ought not only to avoid sin, but also the occasions of sin. Abstain from unprofitable conversations, from diverting entertainments, from railleries, and all things of that nature, which are scarcely ever without sin. Take heed then to bridle your tongue ; let your mouth be pure and innocent, and let no vain or dangerous word proceed from it ; consider it is the door by which this heavenly Host must enter into your soul.

If I demand of you so much circumspection and cleanliness in your mouth, your heart requires yet more ; free it then from all impure thoughts, from all unquietness and vanity ; this is the bed on which your God is to repose ; let him see nothing in it that may offend his eyes. And because the place of the Lord, as the Psalmist says, is a place of peace, it is very fit to set aside, during that time, all affairs

which may distract your mind, or put it in disorder. The bed of the heavenly bridegroom, as it is described by the spouse in the Canticle, is all covered with flowers; mix not with them thorns, that is, sour and discontented thoughts. And if necessity obliges to treat at that time of any difficult business, let it be with so much moderation and reservedness, that your heart be not troubled about it, and that it hinder not the peace and repose of your soul. In these days, you ought to bestow more time on all spiritual exercises; pray, meditate; this is the sweet-smelling incense with which you ought to perfume the house wherein you purpose to receive this heavenly guest; employ yourself especially during these three days, to pass over, with attention in your mind, the three sorts of considerations I have declared to you, to stir up in your souls the fear, love, and hunger you ought to have for the bread of heaven. During these three days pray to the Most Holy Trinity; address yourself every day to one of the Three Persons separately, to the end they may give you the grace and purity which is necessary for this holy communion. Have recourse particularly to the Blessed Virgin, beseeching her by that fervor and that admirable devotion with which she conceived in her womb the Son of God, and received him in her arms after he was born, to obtain for you the grace to receive him worthily into your soul. Beg of her, by that tenderness and those transports with which she herself communicated, and received the

sacred body of her Son, after his ascent into heaven, to obtain for you some part in the grace and love which he made her feel when he gave himself to her. In this prayer to the Queen of Heaven, make particular reflections on the lively faith, the devotion, the tears, and the joy, with which she received her Son under the sacramental species, in expectation of the time when she should see him in all his glory. For if you can conceive anything of the faith and love of this holy creature, that is, with how much firmness and certainty she believed, that in this consecrated bread there was truly her Son's precious body, what affection she had for him, and what desire to see him, possess him, and embrace him in her heart; you will, without doubt, comprehend something of the sentiments of that divine soul, and of the heavenly content she found in herself at the time of her communion. Beg of her some of her devotion, and that she will transmit to you some spark of that divine fire, the least of which would be sufficient to prepare you as you ought for this wonderful feast.

The evening before you communicate, you will do well to abstain, if you can, from supper, or at least to sup very sparingly, without entering into any discourse at table, to the end your sleep may be more pure and quiet, and your mind more free, and that you may spend some part of the night in considering the greatness of what you are going about, and the happiness you shall have the next day. Entering

into your bed, bring thither the same thoughts ; beg of God to preserve you during the night from the illusions and artifices of your enemy, to the end you may approach his Majesty with a great purity of body and soul ; as often as you awake resume the same thoughts, and continue the same prayers you made at your going to bed. And in the morning, as soon as your eyes are open, let your heart be fastened to the cross of Jesus Christ, and filled with the memory of his passion. It is on this divine sacrifice that you ought particularly to meditate all this day, considering the immensity of the love with which the Son of God, for your sake, delivered himself up to this treaty ; how he presented his shoulders to receive the blows which your crimes merited ; and, in fine, with what charity he gives himself to us all at this table for the common remedy of our evils. It was in remembrance of his death that Jesus Christ instituted this sacrament, (*Luke xxii. 19.*) and this is the principal and tenderest of the thoughts which ought to fill your mind, if you desire to satisfy with fidelity, as you are obliged to do, the will of this testator.

CHAPTER VII.

What is to be done in Communicating, and after Communicating.

HAVING declared to you the dispositions which are necessary for you before communion, I am now going

to teach you, in a few words, what you ought to do at the time of your receiving, and after you shall have received. At your approach then to the altar, in order to communicate, imagine that you hear that sweet voice of the Gospel, "Behold! the bridegroom cometh; go ye forth to meet him." *Matt. xxv. 6.* For, in effect, there is no sacrament in which our Lord so openly declares himself to be the bridegroom of our souls, as in the sacrament of the eucharist: its proper effect is to unite to him the soul of the communicant, and to make of two but one thing; which is indeed a spiritual alliance. That you may then go forth to meet this bridegroom, and receive him as he deserves, you need only attentively consider in what state he presents himself. He comes to you full of charity, goodness, humility, and mercy; he tells you, that he earnestly desires to celebrate this Pasch with you, in which the true Lamb is eaten; (*Luke xxii. 15.*) and you ought, on your side, to receive him with all the devotion, love, humility, and joy you are capable of, since you are going to be honored with the presence of your soul's true bridegroom, of your Master, your Creator, your God, and your whole Good. Remember the devotion and joy with which holy old Simeon received in his arms the child Jesus, when he was put into them by his mother. *Luke ii. 28, &c.* He protested that he had only desired life to see his Saviour. Enter into the sentiments of this saint, and let not life be dear to you, but because you are going to possess Jesus.

See with what transport the mother of St. John the Baptist received into her house the mother of her Lord; consider with what satisfaction she said to her these words: "Whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?" *Luke i. 43*

Is it not reasonable, since you receive this Lord in person, that you should testify your joy, and say with this holy woman: Whence is this excess of happiness befallen me, that the Lord of angels, and all the glory of heaven, vouchsafes to come to me. O my Father! O my Pastor, my Lord, my God, and my all! you are not contented with having created me after your image, and redeemed me with your blood; but you will also, by an incomparable prodigy of love, come into me, make your abode in me, transform me into you, and make yourself one and the same thing with me, as if you depended on me, and not I on you. Whence, O my Lord! does this good come unto me? Is it from my merits, or that you would gain some advantage from being with me? No surely; it is an effect of your sole goodness and mercy, which makes you more delight to be with me, than I to be with you. I desire you, only because I am miserable, and have need of your assistance; and you desire me through pure mercy. I seek you, to possess him that can give me all; and you come to find me out, that you may give me all; and because the desire you have to do me good infinitely exceeds the inclination I have to receive it, (since your goodness infinitely surpasses my neces-

sity, I certainly know that the pleasure you have in coming to me, is much beyond that I feel in receiving you; for it is your sacred mouth which teaches me, that "your greatest delights are to be with the children of men." *Prov. viii. 31.* Nor is it more natural for birds to fly, or for fishes to swim, than it is for you, my Sovereign Good, to do good, and communicate yourself.

It is in these or such like thoughts, your heart ought to be employed before the receiving this heavenly Guest, and also after you have received him, so to maintain and nourish in you the devotion he requires. But because the holiness and dignity of this bridegroom are beyond all that can be imagined, and that he is moreover pleased to observe a chaste shame-facedness in his brides, your devotion and joy must be mixed with a very great respect, and a profound humility, considering on the one side the supreme majesty of him who gives himself, and on the other the unworthiness of him that receives. Thus shall you accomplish what David counsels you: "Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice before him with trembling." Now for the procuring these holy affections, you will do well to call to mind the wonderful threats which God commanded to be pronounced to his people, when he intended to give them his law. He caused them to be told, that neither man nor beast should dare to approach the mountain where his Majesty spake, under the penalty of being immediately stoned to death. He permitted

Aaron, his high priest, whom himself had chosen, and some of the most considerable, to come up into the mountain; but at the same time he enjoined them to adore afar off, and not to come near him, reserving that privilege to Moses alone, (*Exod.* xix. 12, 13, &c.) Apply to yourself this example; retire yourself into your own nothingness; humble yourself even to the dust and bottom of the earth, when you receive into your body and soul the Lord of heaven and earth.

SECTION I.

HAVING received the sacred Host, keep it a little while in your mouth, that it may moisten, and so more easily pass down. For want of using this precaution it often happens, that the host sticking to the roof of the mouth, the anxiety with which the receiver endeavors to loosen it, disturbs all the devotion that this precious moment requires: but great care should be taken to let the sacred host pass into the stomach before it would be so moistened as to melt in the mouth; for then it would not be actually receiving it as commanded. Forbear spitting presently after you have communicated, if you can avoid it; and if necessity force you to spit, let it be in some clean and decent place, where it may not be trod on by any. Eat not as soon as you come from communion, because you cannot, without some sort of irreverence, burden your stomach with meat whilst the sacramental species remain yet entire in it. The

time which immediately follows this divine action you have now been finishing, is the fittest of all to treat with God, to taste how sweet he is, and to embrace him in the midst of your heart. Continue some time in the church, in the place where you have communicated, giving God thanks for this extraordinary benefit; persist a while in meditating on all these circumstances, and say with your mouth some of the prayers which I shall for this purpose put at the end of this third book. Keep yourself composed, and especially avoid a fault into which many persons fall, who make no scruple of prattling and laughing with others immediately after they have communicated. This I esteem a very great offence, and highly deserving to be condemned; for can you treat with greater incivility a guest who should come to visit you, than to turn your back on him as soon as he is come into your house, and leave his company to divert yourself about other matters. It is the opinion of Cardinal Cajetan, that the holy sacrament communicates its virtue to the souls of the receivers, not only at the time of their actual receiving, but also in that which follows, and as long as the species continue whole in the stomach; and he believes that on this occasion may be said what our Lord said on another: "As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world." *John ix. 5.* If this be so, as this learned doctor supposes, it is a very great reason to invite you to continue during that time very closely recollected, and in a particular devo-

tion, to the end this heavenly grace may be communicated to you in greater abundance, since this sacrament operates conformably to the disposition it finds in souls. The two principal passages by which the Holy Ghost most frequently conveys into us his influences, are the understanding and the will, giving to the one great lights, and to the other more tender sentiments for the things of God. You would act then with very little reason, if by such voluntary distractions you should keep these doors shut during so advantageous a time. It is at this time you may receive one of the greatest fruits of your communion, and enjoy the most delicious repast of this table ; and since the principal is done, and you have this divine food in a manner still in your breast, do not depart when you ought most familiarly to open the bosom of your soul to God, and receive the most beneficial effects of the sacrament and the preparation you have brought to it.

You desire, perhaps, I should declare to you something more particular, and tell you in what you may best employ these happy moments ; in a word, brethren, employ them in praising God, and in the exercise of his love ; for here, as St. Bernard says, is given the kiss of peace, the sweetness of which nothing can equal ; here is made that union of the soul with the heavenly Bridegroom ; and this is truly the time and place to raise your soul higher to God by holy aspirations, which are nothing else but frequent acts of love and burning desires of the chiefest

good, such as were those of the prophet when he said, "I will love thee, O Lord, my strength;" (*Psalm* xvii. 1.) and in another place, "As the hart panteth after the fountains of waters, so my soul panteth after thee, O God." (*Psalm* xli. 1.) I advise you also to take time to give thanks to God for his benefits, and especially for this, in which the Giver of all Goodness gives even himself. And that you may the better understand how much you are obliged to make this last acknowledgment, remember the command which God gave Moses after he had rained down manna on the people of Israel: he bid him take a vessel of gold and fill it with manna, to be kept in the ark for an eternal memorial of that benefit, and to the end that all the successors of that people might know in what manner he had fed their ancestors for forty years in the desert. (*Exod.* xvi. 32, &c.) There is no comparison between this manna, which was a corruptible food, and the most holy sacrament, which is the bread of eternal life. And if God required such an acknowledgment for that perishable meat, what do you not owe him, and what may not he exact of you for this which is life, and the source of a life that shall never have an end? This gift is so great, that there are no words sufficient to express it. During the whole day in which you shall have obtained this happiness, keep yourself very reserved, and take heed not to do anything which may offend the presence of a God, whose goodness has made him condescend to lodge with you

The kingly prophet protested that he would lie prostrate with respect in the place where the Lord had set his feet. (*Psalms* cxxxi. 7.) And you ought on this day to have a holy respect for your own body, in which God himself reposes. This respect consists partly in regulating your exterior, but much more in not permitting anything to enter into your interior, which is not of God. You should especially take care to keep during that day a religious silence ; you must, if I may be permitted to use such a comparison, stop the oven's mouth, for fear the heat of devotion which the fire of God's love has kindled, should evaporate. The spirit of devotion is delicate, it easily slips away if it be not entertained, and returns not but with much difficulty. Thus the holy sacrament will keep you in modesty and recollection during the days which precede communion, and those that follow it. And as the sun enlightens and embellishes the world, not only when he has got above the horizon, but also an hour before he rises, and an hour after he is set ; so the Sun of Justice, who is contained in this admirable sacrament, will enlighten your souls, not only at the time you receive him, but also both before and after your receiving him ; before by the hopes of receiving so wonderful a favor ; after, by the remembrance of having been so highly honored.

You will find in the fifth book of this Memorial several prayers and meditations which will render all these exercises much more easy to you, provided you read them with attention and recollection, stay-

ing and meditating on the things which shall most move you, and wherein you shall find the greatest relish.

CHAPTER VIII.

On the use of the Sacraments of Penance and the Blessed Eucharist, and on the profit received by often frequenting them.

HAVING now copiously set forth in what manner you ought to prepare yourself, that you may worthily receive the holy communion, I am now going more briefly to inform you of the profit you may gain by the frequent use of the sacraments, if you take care to approach them as you ought.

In the first place, you must know that the sacraments of the law of grace are, as it were, the conduits and channels of heaven, by which the Holy Ghost conveys his graces, and which originally have their sources from the side of Jesus Christ, according to that curious conception of St. Chrysostom, that all those who communicate ought to make account that they are putting their mouths to the wounds of that precious side, and drinking there the water of life. They are remedies and medicines for our weaknesses, which none knows better than he who was sent to cure them, and who wanted neither knowledge nor love to invent what was most convenient for them. It was not reasonable there should be so many sorts of medicines to cure our bodies, and that there should be none for our souls, which are subject to no less

distempers ; since it is of far greater importance to provide for their diseases than for those of the body, they being of a far greater and more excellent value. For this end were the sacraments of the law of grace instituted : it was fit, that being a perfect law, and requiring perfect subjects, it should comprehend all that is necessary for our salvation ; and for this reason, as our maladies are different and numerous, it has several sacraments to remedy them.

Nor do the sacraments alone on their part help us to obtain so good an effect ; but what we also contribute on ours for the worthy receiving them. You go to confession ; you accuse yourself of your past sins ; you testify the sorrow you feel for having committed them ; you humble yourself at the feet of Jesus Christ's minister ; you beg pardon for your offences ; you take a firm resolution to amend ; and, in fine, God receives you, and you are reconciled to him by the ministry of the church. You cannot sufficiently esteem the benefit of this divine remedy ; nothing is so capable to help you to regulate your life ; and being to give an account of your conscience from time to time, will make you, without doubt, become careful to keep it in a good condition. A traveller that walks between two walls is obliged to go the direct way, since he can neither turn aside on one hand or the other ; so the confession you have made, and that which must soon follow, are a great means to keep you from declining to anything that is ill. How beneficial is this sacrament ; how great is its

necessity in the church ; and how desirable is it that Christians have at least as much esteem for spiritual things as they have for temporal, to the end they might comprehend its worth ! Must not a garden be continually dressed ? Must not a house be daily swept ? Must not the linen you use be often washed ; because all these things grow foul if they are not frequently cleansed ? You can less continue in so corrupt a world as this we live in, without having your soul stained and defiled ; and you would at the same time renounce both piety and reason, if you would not have recourse to so easy a remedy, and often make use of it, since you are so often in danger. Wash your soul in the wholesome water of penance and confession once a week, since you wash at least so often the linen which covers your body ; for the purity of your soul is as much to be preferred before the cleanliness of your body, as the one is more estimable and more precious than the other.

See with how much haste and care the mariners lay their hand to the pump of their ship, to empty out the water it continually gathers in, especially in time of rain, for fear, lest being overburdened, it should sink down to the bottom. The venial sins we daily commit appear nothing to us, and yet they are like drops of water which fall into the bottom of our soul, and bring us by little and little to mortal sins, which utterly sink us, and cause our death. Let us go then to the remedy which may preserve us from the lesser, that so we may avoid falling into the

greater, which would bring us to an irrevocable loss. We see, also, how nature of herself provides for the ease of bodies filled with ill-humors, opening some issue by which they are purged ; and that by these means, those who otherwise could scarcely live, are a long time preserved in a state of health, and that physicians are very careful not to stop these natural issues, because they will not deprive their patients of so certain a remedy. What nature wisely finds out for the preservation of bodies, grace more efficaciously does for the saving of souls ; there are daily bred in us ill-humors by sin, and they are daily purged and washed away by a good confession.

SECTION I.

Of the Effects of Sacramental Communion.

THUS are souls purified, and thus do they receive health in confession ; but since this health is exposed to many dangers, God has of his goodness given them a powerful remedy for its preservation ; that is, the most holy sacrament of the altar, which Jesus Christ has instituted in the form of food ; “ because, as food maintains the life of the body, so this sacrament sustains the life of the spirit.” (*S. Thom. part 3. q. 79.*) This life is charity, which this divine preservative supports amidst all the contradictions it meets with here below. Wherefore Jesus Christ said, that “ his flesh was meat indeed, and his blood was drink indeed.” (*John vi. 56.*) And all the fathers on these words unanimously teach us, that this

divine meat works spiritually in souls all the effects which the ordinary nourishment does in bodies ; for it strengthens us in the spiritual life, it causes in our souls an inward relish which fills them with joy, it restores supernatural forces, it repairs the virtues which are weakened, it enables to resist temptations, and makes men grow up to the highest perfection they ought to ascend to, if they themselves put no impediment to it.

If you ask, how it is possible that a corporal substance should produce such a spiritual effect as the preserving and augmenting of charity, and the maintaining in us the life of the soul ; I will tell you, that this wonder comes from the supernatural virtue of the sacraments which God has ordained : he would have them serve for a remedy to our weakness, and that under visible forms they should operate invisible effects. Thus in the sacrament of baptism, the water, which outwardly washes the body, inwardly cleanses the soul from all its filth, and puts it in the state of grace. This divine sacrament does the same in its manner, as being a sacrament, and the greatest of all sacraments ; but besides this it has two signal advantages above all the rest, which cause it more powerfully to produce this effect. The first is, that with the flesh it truly contains in it the soul of Jesus Christ, and the eternal WORD of the living God, and the life of all things, who by the means of the sacrament enters into the soul of the believer which communicates and produces in it the admira-

ble effect of giving him a spiritual life. The physician, designing to cure his patient with some powders, puts them into water, to the end the water, which is liquid, may carry the remedy through all the parts of the body in which it is to make its operation. In like manner acts the Physician of our souls; he would unite the divine Word with the flesh of man, that entering by this admirable way into men composed of flesh, it might work in them this kind of health and life.

The second is, that it is not only the divine Word which operates this effect by itself, but the flesh, which he has united to himself, participates of the same virtue; and this flesh, as the instrument of the Word, and by the union it has with him, causes also life, and a true spring of life. (*S. Thom. part 3. q. 97. art. 1.*) Wherefore our Lord, as soon as he had raised the prince of the synagogue's daughter, commanded they should give her to eat, (*Luke viii. 55.*) to the end the life he had restored her by his power might be preserved by nourishment; and to teach us, that souls raised by the virtue of Almighty God, which is found in the sacrament of penance, stand in need of this heavenly food to preserve in them, by this last sacrament, the life they have received by the first. Thus you see how necessary these two sacraments are for the spiritual life, since the one gives it, and the other maintains it. If you desire then to obtain this happy life, confess often; and if you desire to preserve it, communicate often. Nor think to

find any other reason why you see at this day so many people die spiritually, but because they will not follow the counsel I here give you. It is for the same reason that in the greatest part of men there is not seen any spark of charity, in which the life of the soul consists, because scarce any one makes use of the sacred preservatives which God has ordained for this effect. Charity, as Cardinal Cajetan admirably well says, is in this world as out of her natural place ; she is a citizen of heaven, where, having the Sovereign good present, she incessantly burns with love of him : but on earth she is like a stranger ; she finds there a thousand things which are contrary to her, and she has need of a strong defensive to subsist there. One drop of water cast into the sea endures for ever, because it is in its element, and of the same nature with the other water it is mixed with ; but if you pour it on the earth, it is immediately dried up, because of the natural dryness of the place where it was spilt, which is contrary to it. A town situated in the heart of a kingdom is secure from enemies ; it needs neither fortifications nor garrisons to preserve it ; but a frontier town is in danger of being lost, if it be not defended by ramparts and soldiers. So charity in this life runs great hazards ; she is here out of her natural place ; her enemies are numerous and mighty ; and she would never subsist if her Sovereign had not fortified her with powerful defences, of which the strongest is, undoubtedly, the holy sacrament. David perceived something of it when

he said, "Thou hast prepared a table before me (which gives me virtue and strength) against them that afflict me." *Psalm* xxii 5. And if we are all exposed to the assaults which these enemies daily make upon us, how can we resist them without the success of this table, which God has prepared, and which is all our strength? Wo be to them, says St. Bernard, that are called to do the works of the mighty, and do not eat the bread of the mighty. Who are they, brethren, that are called to do the actions of the strong and hardy, but such as in the day of their baptism declared themselves the soldiers of Jesus Christ, and enemies to the devil, and all his pomps? And what is the food that gives strength against these terrible enemies, but this divine sacrament; which, according to St. Chrysostom, changes those who come to it, and makes them lions, who cast fire out of their mouths. Wherefore, instead of what we read, "Man eat the bread of angels," (*Psalm* lxxvii. 25.) St. Jerome has translated, "Man has eaten the bread of the mighty." For such in effect is the holy sacrament, which was prefigured by that bread.

And, therefore, with great reason does this holy father bewail the unhappiness of those who, seeing themselves daily called to the battle, and having no arms for their defence which are equal to those of the eucharist, will not make use of them, knowing that the loss of so many souls as we daily see perish, happens only through this negligence. In the time

of the primitive Church, when this sacrament was continually administered to the faithful, the Christians, strengthened with its virtue, surmounted, without difficulty, the rage of their persecutors: they daily laid down their lives for the sake of justice, for which we do not take the least pains. Change then, in fine, your conduct; you have need of a remedy among so many dangers and deaths to which you are so perpetually exposed. Draw near to this table, feed yourself with this bread of the mighty, and resolve to renounce the errors of this age, and to imitate the piety of those who lived in the first ages of the church, if you desire to fight well and be crowned with them.

SECTION II.

Answers to the Objections of the Slothful.

CARNAL men, and such as have no other rule for their conduct but their senses and corrupt will, ask why so many confessions and communions; and whether it be not sufficient to confess once a year, as the church ordains. Those that speak thus neither understand the corruption of nature, nor the virtue of this heavenly medicine, nor the necessity we have for it.

If man were sick but once a year, it would be sufficient for him only once a year to make use of these remedies; but if man's whole life is nothing but a continual train of infirmities; if the heat of our con-

cupiscence so often scorches us ; if pride, envy, impurity, the festered wound of our ancient enemies, the loathing of spiritual things, and an insatiable hunger after earthly things, make in us every moment such strange ravages ; shall we be so negligent as to delay the providing against them till the year is expired ? and do we think by such slow remedies to cure the evils we daily feel ? Plasters have but little force when applied to old sores. Confession, I grant, cures sin ; but it takes not away the roots of them ; the ill habits in which we are grown old continue, and the cure of them is exceedingly difficult.

What would you say of a man who should see his house set on fire, or his walls pulling down by his enemies, and should wait till the end of the year to oppose it ? Would you not accuse him of cowardice or folly ? Yet this is the case of most men. Our flesh daily burns with as many flames as it feels irregular desires ; the devils, which are our greatest enemies, make continual attacks upon our heart, to whom we can oppose nothing of so great power as the sacraments : the danger is extreme and present, and will you stay a year before you remedy it ? Whoever acts thus, knows not the value of his soul, understands not the perverseness of his flesh, is ignorant of the virtue of the sacraments, and of the end for which they were instituted ; for it is not more certain that physic was invented to cure the diseases of our bodies, and bread to preserve them, than it is true that the sacrament of penance was ordained to

heal the maladies of our souls, and that of the communion to nourish them. You will tell me, that at the end of this year God will pardon all your sins: be it so; but do you not apprehend the tyranny of ill custom, which having taken deep root in your souls, cannot be plucked up without difficulty? What certainty have you that you will live a year, a month, even a day, or an hour? Do you make nothing of so many offences that you might have avoided, which are of greater importance than the loss of a thousand worlds? Have you no fear of the other sins which this first sin will draw after it, since St. Gregory says, that the sin which is not redeemed by penance, is soon followed by some other no less heavy than the former. Can it be doubted, but that it were better to prevent dangerous wounds, than to seek a cure for them after they are made? The church indeed obliges you not to communicate above once a year; but do you not know, that in this she acts like a tender mother, who would not give the weak occasion either to communicate unworthily, or to break her laws, as some do, who quite forsake the communion. It is an indulgence she uses in favor of the weak, leaving the door open, and this holy table always prepared, for those who have more devotion and piety.

There are many that understand well what I say, and know by experience the virtue of the sacraments; but they make a difficulty to receive them often, for shame of the world; being like those Pharisees of

whom St. John speaks, that “believed in Jesus Christ, but durst not confess him, because of the Pharisees;” and whom the holy Evangelist accuses, “that they loved the glory of men more than the glory of God.” *John* xii. 42, 43. Are you not truly guilty of that fault; for confessing as you do, that this sacrament was instituted by Jesus Christ, and that himself ordained the use of it, what is your not daring to come to it, for fear of the world, but being ashamed to declare yourself a good Christian, and true disciple of Jesus Christ. St. Peter bewailed all his life one such fault; he was afraid to appear one of Jesus Christ’s disciples, and the shame of the world made him deny him. Bewail, as he did, your infidelities with tears of blood. Jesus Christ reigns now in heaven, he is adored by the world, and men are ashamed to appear his disciples. In what manner, says Salvian, is Jesus Christ at this day honored amongst Christians, when the being his is an occasion to make one less esteemed of men? Can the corruption of the world come to any greater extremity, than to hold religion as a mean and dishonorable thing? On the contrary, it is this only that deserves honor, and to which all divine and human laws have given respect and deference. Say then no longer, that the clamors of the world keep you back from this divine mystery. You know that amongst those three great enemies of our souls, of which the Scripture makes mention, one of the most dangerous is the world. You know that it opposed

Jesus Christ, and that it persecuted the apostles, prophets, and all the saints. Would you after this have any esteem for the most open of your enemies? Who ever relied on the counsel of his adversary, and of an adversary who has sworn an irreconcilable war? The world withdraws you from the holy mysteries; Jesus Christ invites you to them, when he says, "Come to me, all you that labor and are burdened and I will refresh you." *Matt. xi. 28.* To which of these two voices ought you with greatest reason give ear? If Jesus Christ calling us on the one side, and the world on the other, we run to the world and leave Jesus Christ, how can we be named the servants of Jesus Christ? We are the servants of him whose will we do, and whom we desire to please; and it is to us that the apostle said, "If I go about to please men, I am no longer the servant of Jesus Christ." Follow your master's voice: you might perhaps allege some excuse, if the world called you to rest, and Jesus Christ to labor; but it is quite contrary, as St. Augustin represents it: "The world," says he, "cries to you, (more by action than by voice,) there is nothing so weak as I am; Jesus Christ says to you, there is nothing so strong as I am; and yet my miserable soul chooses rather the world, weak as it is, than Jesus Christ, with all his strength." *Solil. c. 10.*

Tell me, moreover, why do you trouble yourself about the talk of the world? Does it deprive you of any considerable good, or do you any great injury?

In no wise : you are like fearful beasts, terrified at a shadow, or something in the air ; all these fears are only the effect of your self-love, which is so jealous of your advantages, and so fearful to let you do any thing without security, that it apprehends not only real, but even imaginary dangers. But though there should indeed be cause to fear, and though the persecution of men should proceed even to the shedding of your blood, could you refuse to expose yourself to a little pain, for the enjoyment of so great a good ? Could you think you had paid too dear for so precious a thing ? A bear, being got to a hive, cares not though the bees sting him on all sides, so he may but have his fill of honey. You possess with the Holy Ghost a heap of all good things ; you taste in it the greatness of all sweetness ; and will you not, for the enjoyment of so rare a consolation, support with cheerfulness the stings of some slanderous tongue.

I know others as guilty as these, who, through mere sloth, and because they will not take the time necessary to prepare themselves for communion, deprive themselves of this holy sacrament, and of Jesus Christ himself, the most excellent of all the benefits contained in it. Some Christians are so indifferent to the things of God, that they esteem not this treasure, and a little care or a little retirement appears difficult to them for obtaining the possession of it. Indeed, brethren, you are far from the sentiments of the saints, and particularly of the holy martyr, St.

Ignatius, who, in one of his letters has these excellent words: "Let fire, crosses, wild beasts, the rending of all my members, all the torments of the world, and all those the devils can invent, fall upon me, provided I may be worthy to enjoy Jesus Christ." This holy man desired to be exposed to all the martyrdoms which the cruelty of the devils could make him suffer, that he might by these means go to Jesus Christ: and will you, knowing that Jesus Christ comes to you in this sacrament, think much of taking a little pains to dispose yourself, by prayer and confession, for the fruition of your God? Can any greater folly be imagined, than to let yourself perish for hunger, for fear of stretching forth your hands to a great banquet which is prepared for you? "The sluggard," says the wise man, "hideth his hand under his arm-pit, and will not so much as bring it to his mouth." *Prov. xix. 24.* In truth, there can nothing be conceived more abominable, and I see not what excuse you can make at the day of judgment for having on so small an occasion contemned the greatest of all remedies, and the most precious of God's gifts.

Neither allege to me that you abstain from it through respect; and that if you long delay your approach to the communion, it is that you may come to it with greater reverence. One of the many effects produced by this holy sacrament is, that the frequenting it augments our esteem of it. Amongst men, too frequent conversation breeds contempt;

but in the communion with Jesus Christ, when you receive him worthily, grace is given you with him, who is the fountain of all grace, and the oftener you receive him the more grace you receive; and the more grace increases, the more is fear, love, devotion, humility, and all other virtues, which proceed from grace, and are the true preparations that this august sacrament requires, increased in you. Those who receive it seldom, deprive themselves of these fruits, and undoubtedly receive it with less devotion. . St. Gregory affords us another proof of it, by the difference he puts between the taste of the spiritual and corporal delights. “The one,” says this saint, speaking of sensual desires, “inflames us with desire, whilst unenjoyed; but as soon as we are possessed of them, they tire and disgust us; as appears in two persons, of which the one is hungry and the other filled. But the other, (that is, spiritual delights,) are of a very different nature; they are not desired before they are possessed, because they are not known; but when they are once tasted, the possession of them augments the desire; one is never satisfied with them, and those that feed on them find what Wisdom says: ‘They that eat me shall still hunger, and they that drink me shall still thirst.’” Whence it is easy to conclude, that if the desire and hunger after this heavenly bread make one of the principal dispositions we ought to bring to the receiving it; and if it be true, that the desire increases by the possession of this bread of life, which is the

delight of the saints ; it is also clear, that the more you shall receive it, the more you will desire it, and the more worthily you will receive it ; and, on the contrary, if you long delay your coming to it, since on the one side, you will want this great help, and on the other, your sins will be multiplied for want of using it, this delay will undoubtedly be the cause that you will not make so good a communion.

You will tell me again, that you find in yourself much weakness, that you are a sinner, and that you hold yourself unworthy this heavenly food. I answer you, that not finding yourself burdened with any mortal sin, you ought to come to it for this very reason that keeps you back. This sacrament obtains the pardon of sins ; it gives strength to those that are weak ; it is the cure of the sick, and the treasure of the poor ; wherefore some saints have said, that often, by the virtue of this sacrament, have attrite men become contrite ; which is no less than to say, that of the dead they became living. Remember that Jesus Christ did eat with publicans and sinners, and that he said to the Jews, who were scandalized at it, " They that are in health need not a physician, but they that are ill ;" and " I am not come to call the just, but sinners." (*Matt. ix. 12, 13.*) It is good to refrain from this sacrament through fear, and it is good to come to it through love, because both the one and the other honor God ; but, as St. Thomas determines, it is better to draw near through love, than to keep back through fear ; because, generally

speaking, actions which are done for love, are better and more excellent than those that are done for fear. Wherefore we read, that David, having seen how God had slain Osa for the little respect he bore to the ark of the testament, durst not bring it into his own house, but carried it aside into that of Obededom ; but seeing how God had heaped upon Obededom and his whole family happiness and prosperity, then casting off all the fear which had terrified him, and being encouraged by the marks God had given him of his goodness, he received the ark into his palace, and with it all sorts of benedictions.

CHAPTER IX.

Of the Cause why some Persons find little Devotion when they Celebrate or Communicate.

I KNOW some questions may be asked on this occasion ; and because they appear not without ground, I have thought it convenient to answer them. The first is, whence it comes to pass that some persons, who often celebrate and communicate, enjoy not the sweetness they might expect from the use of this heavenly bread ; and the second, that there are others, who are so far from having any taste of them, that it does not appear they are the least advanced in virtue, but continue still in one and the same state.

I answer, that this sometimes happens through the fault of these persons who prepare not themselves as they ought to communicate, or because their life is not regular enough; thus it is not to be wondered at if they find not the satisfaction which others receive who are better disposed, whose life is more perfect, and their soul more pure, and consequently more susceptible of heavenly things. This sometimes also happens by God's particular order, those who communicate contributing nothing to it through any fault of theirs, because this state is for their good. We often see the experience of it in the most just, who, though their fervor in prayer is no way abated, lose all the consolations they formerly found in it; yet are not therefore less just, or less agreeable to God, who thus tries their constancy, and by this means exercises and humbles them. Others fall into this sort of desertion, because they observe not in their devotion all the prudence it requires, as St. Bonaventure teaches us in these words; "It sometimes happens to spiritual persons, that the more they labor to acquire the devotion which is termed sensible, the less they find it; and the more eager they are to possess it, as on holydays, and especially when they will communicate, the farther they are from it. Many are exceedingly afflicted at it, and in this dejection to which their heart is reduced, they judge that perhaps God will not have them approach him in this state; or else they believe that he drives them from his presence, as unworthy

to participate of so great a sacrament ; and in these apprehensions they deprive themselves of the chiefest remedy which might cure them." Of this I could easily allege to you divers reasons, some of which regard the defects that happen on our part, and others the particular will and dispensation of God : but to confine ourselves to the point of which we are treating, the principal and most common is, that on these days and those of communion, devotion is sought with too much vehemence. Our souls, by efforts which have perhaps somewhat of self-love, violate too much their liberty ; we stifle the power of nature when we labor with too great force to press, and, as I may say, squeeze forth the juice of devotion. If we find it not as soon as we desire it, we are seized on by sorrow ; thus we remain with more hardness, and less disposition to receive it ; our own forces are turned against us, and having spent ourselves, we become more distracted and dry. "He," says the wise man, "that over-much wrings the paps for milk, will draw out blood ;" and we see by experience, that when an orange, or any other fruit, is too much squeezed, the juice which comes from it is neither so pure, nor so sweet.

This is what befalls those who will have devotion as it were by force. The affections it produces are more tender when the heart is more at liberty ; and this is the reason why we often find ourselves more touched with devotion at other times than on great festivals, because the troublesome care we then take

to have devotion, suffocates the spirit of it; whereas at other times, the desire being more moderate, the spirit acts with greater freedom and purity, which are two dispositions that very much contribute to the more easy finding what is sought.

As to the second question, why some of those that celebrate or communicate often make not the least progress, not only in devotion, but even in common virtues, and that, on the contrary, they are always seen to continue in the same coldness and negligence; a wise doctor answers, that, regularly speaking, this happens for two reasons; the one, through the default of their indevout preparation, as we have already said, touching the want of devotion: they present not themselves to the divine mysteries with that fervor of charity, and that spiritual hunger, which such excellent things deserve; they come to them either through custom or necessity, and having received them, lose at the same time all remembrance of them; they immediately open the door to all manner of other objects, and put not the least restraint on their tongue, or the desires of their heart; so that going without respect, and returning without recollection, it is no wonder they gain so little benefit by it. I mentioned to you in the beginning of this book, that true maxim, that all things work according to the dispositions they find in the subjects, which is confirmed by the example of this great sacrament: it acts in souls according to the disposition it meets

with in them ; it acts much in such as are well prepared, and operates less in those who are not so.

The other cause is, that many people frequent the holy altars, who still keep in their souls certain defects, and certain secret passions, of which they make no account ; and for want of correcting and mortifying them, they become almost irremediable. These secret evils are a great obstacle to the advancement of those souls, and I put in the first place the excess of self-love and self-will, the over-curious care of the body, and the satisfaction of the senses, which make those who are subject to them seek in all things the means to divert themselves. They lay themselves out on creatures, amongst which devotion is dissipated, or wholly lost ; they are like those vessels of ill-baked clay, which cannot hold the liquor put into them, but let it run out by little and little, till there is nothing left in them. This misfortune particularly befalls those who amuse themselves in vain conversations, and discourses of raillery, or embarrass themselves with unnecessary visits or affairs ;—for, in fine, all these things disorder the place where this heavenly Bridegroom is to take his rest ; the love of God is a very delicate thing ; it admits no rivals, it will alone possess the whole heart.

CHAPTER X.

Whether it be good to Communicate very often.

AFTER my exhorting you, as I have done in the foregoing chapter, to frequent the sacraments, and particularly that of the eucharist, you have reason to ask me, would I prescribe you some rule, and tell you the time to which you shall limit your communions

The answer to the question is, on the one side, very easy, and on the other, very difficult; for if we only regard the virtue and efficacy of this sacrament, how Jesus Christ resides in it, who is the Author of all graces, and that by this means he applies to us the merits of his passion, which is of an infinite value, we ought, if we could, to receive him an infinity of times, since we receive by him a proportionate number of graces and favors. But, if, on the other side, we consider the high preparation this sacrament requires, according to which it communicates its virtue; and that it is the sacrament of the living, and not of the dead, since eating supports life; in this view it is clear, that it is not fit to communicate often, but according to the disposition that is found in the communicants; on which there are yet many things that are necessary to be examined.

First, the state or condition of every one is to be considered; for persons dedicated to God's service, as priests, monks, nuns, and all other religious persons, being more free from the perplexity of the world, and the care of secular business, have undoubtedly,

in respect of their state, greater disposition to approach this sacrament. I say in respect of their state, because Jesus Christ often supplies it by his wisdom, which he gives to whom he pleases, as he pleases, and in what state soever. David, Abraham, Job, and many ancient kings and patriarchs, were raised to a great perfection, though their state contributed little to the attaining it; but they were assisted by divine grace, which is more powerful than all states, how perfect soever they may be.

Secondly, care must be taken that every one, before all things, discharge the duties of the state to which he is called; and in such manner apply himself to spiritual exercises, that they no way prejudice these first and stricter obligations. A married woman, who is obliged to serve her husband, to breed up her children, to look particularly after her daughters, to take care of her domestic affairs, ought in such manner to give herself to matters of devotion, that she omit not those which are of obligation, since the one is of free will, and the other of necessity; the one is of counsel, the other of commandment. One of the principal foundations of a good life is, never to leave the works of justice for those of grace. "Obedience is better than sacrifices," (1 *Kings* xv. 22.) said a holy prophet; and he calls obedience whatsoever is of obligation, and sacrifice what is of devotion and free will. Men, through a perverse inclination, have almost a natural opposition to this order, and take more pleasure to do their own will,

than another's. Take heed of this, and observe that what I have said of the duties of women towards their husbands and children, concerns also those of children to their parents, especially if they are poor, old, or weak. The services you shall do them in their necessities make a part of the first commandment of the second table ; and, after what we owe to God, it is the first obligation he lays upon us. The irrational creatures, through the sole instinct of nature, invite you to it by their example ; and the storks with wonderful care assist those from whom they had their being, in their later years. Use then the sacraments in such sort that you forget not obligations so just and so important as these, for otherwise your devotion will not be acceptable to God.

In the third place, every one ought to examine himself, and thoroughly consider what he undertook when he took up this custom of communicating often : he must look whether he finds himself in dispositions pure enough, and, as I may say, with all the apparel of virtues which are necessary for the worthy persevering in this excellent design. If it be so, they may continue without fear, and with much profit ; for as trees that are wont to be watered, grow dry when they want this relief, so souls which are accustomed to this heavenly food, are exceedingly weakened when they are deprived of this benefit, which is so great, and so proportioned to their necessities ; they are often seen to grow very slack in their spiritual life, and sometimes entirely to renounce what

they had happily begun. It is a thing generally confirmed by experience, that weak bodies, being once used to a medicine which does them good, find themselves very ill when they quit it : it is the same with souls of this quality, if through their own fault they discontinue the use of so wholesome a remedy. Thus it is for them to know the advantages they draw from it, and then to watch carefully over their lives, so as to keep themselves in so pure a state, that they may continue the frequent use of it without scruple, since they run the hazard of losing their strength, and fainting by the way, if they forsake so powerful and so efficacious an assistance.

It is also to be observed, that men may take more liberty to go forth of their house whither they shall think convenient, to seek the sacraments, and priests which may administer them to them, than is fit for women. The same thing is also more seemly for elderly than for young women ; and, generally speaking, all the saints have very much recommended to the younger women the keeping retired and out of the sight of people. Even in the old law, Almighty God expressly commanded the men to appear before him thrice a year in his temple, never obliged the women to come thither, so much as once in their whole life. *Deut. xvi. 16.* The Eternal Wisdom knew how dangerous it is for this sex to be gadding abroad ; and Dina, Jacob's daughter, showed but too sad an experience of it ; for by only once going forth of her father's house, she destroyed herself, and a

whole city with her. *Gen.* xxxiv. Wherefore not without cause does St. Ambrose praise the blessed Virgin, that departing out of her house, where she had always kept herself retired, she went in great haste when she was obliged to go and visit her cousin, St. Elizabeth. *Luke* i. 39. I say not this to impose a perpetual cloister on maidens, but to exhort them to speak as much as they can to God in private, to seek him in the most secret corners of their houses, and to go as little abroad as is possible, unless it be on such days as the church command, or when, according to custom, they are to receive the blessed sacrament, doing it with the circumspect I advise them to. I make not this, however, a general rule, for such persons are to be excepted from it, who, though young in years, are yet very old in virtue.

In fine, every one ought to consult his conscience, and consider what benefit he receives by frequent communion; for if a person by often receiving finds himself more devout, more recollected, more circumspect in his words, more diligent in good works, more vigilant over his actions, more master over his passions and other irregular desires, though it be not in a very eminent degree, it is a proof that this sacrament is profitable to him, and therefore he ought to come the oftener to it, as he receives from it more advantageous effects; but if he sees nothing of all this in himself, it is an assured mark of the little profit he gets by it, and of the slender preparation he makes for it. It is, therefore fit for such a person either to abate

the number of his communions, or to augment the virtues which are necessary for his communicating well. It is, notwithstanding true, that this divine mystery sometimes works so secretly that it can scarce be perceived; for grace, as well as nature, acts ordinarily by little and little, as it happens in plants, the growth whereof is imperceptible, and not to be discerned till they have attained their just height. Wherefore we ought not on this occasion to rely on our own judgment, but be guided by our confessor, who may determine all according to his prudence.

In the meantime it is of very great importance to observe, that we not only profit when we go forward, but also when we go not backward. I know St. Bernard says, that "in the way of God, not to go forward is to go backward: one may, nevertheless, more easily perceive when he turns back than when he goes forward; as the motion of a stone is more clearly discerned, which with violence rolls down a hill, than that of another which is insensibly thrust upwards; for to increase is very hard, and to decrease is very easy; and it is easier to pull down than to build." *Serm. 2 Purif. et Ep.* 324. Wherefore I say, that if on the one side we observe we make but little progress by often frequenting the communion; and on the other side also perceive, that by discontinuing it we turn backward, fall into notable defects, and find ourselves more unable to resist temptations, more cold in prayer, more reluctant to obedience, more slothful in works of mercy,

more easily provoked to unseemly laughter, or to vain or idle talk ; more impatient in troubles, and, in fine, more careless and negligent in watching over ourselves and our actions ; if, I say, we perceive that we fall into all these inconveniences, or into any of them, when we refrain from the holy sacrament, and that when we receive it we are less subject to them, it is a sign we profit by it ; because to suffer less damage is in some sort to profit, and medicines which preserve from distempers are no less necessary than those which increase health. This consideration ought very much to comfort those who do not so clearly perceive in themselves the fruits of the communion ; and though these persons often commit venial sins, they ought not therefore to abstain from communicating, provided they seriously repent them of their sins ; for, as St. Hilary says, “ we ought not to forsake the wholesome medicine of our Lord’s body, if we bring not to it mortal sins ; on the contrary, this reason rather obliges us to have recourse to it, since one of the effects of the holy sacrament, and its particular virtue, is to serve for a preservative against these sorts of sins, without which this life cannot be passed over.”

All these things being supposed, there is none but may easily judge whether he ought to present himself at this heavenly table seldom or often, for it will be sufficient for some to communicate on the principal festivals of the year, for others once a month or once in fifteen days, and for others once

every week, as St. Augustin advises: "wherewith all sorts of persons, how virtuous soever, ought to content themselves, unless there happen any particular circumstance of important cause, which may oblige them to do otherwise. For as there is no rule without exception, so nothing can be established as perpetual that has not some limitation." *Lib. de Eccl. Dog. c. 58.* This is St. Bonaventure's advice in a treatise of perfection, which he wrote for one of his sisters, where he has in substance the same things we have here explained. His words are these: "If any one desire to know whether it is better to communicate seldom or often, it seems impossible to me to prescribe in this one general rule for all. For the merits of men, as also their designs and exercises, being different, the motions of the Holy Ghost differs, and there being so many several states of life in the world, it is as difficult to make one general rule that may be suitable for them all, as one garment to fit every person. Wherefore, as one and the same medicine is not administered to all patients, nor yet in the same quantity; and as to render it beneficial, the quality of the persons and diseases, their complexions, the time and place must be considered; so the same thing is to be done in what concerns this heavenly medicine. Those that are entangled with the cares and troubles of the world can more rarely get rid of them to receive, than they who are free from all this incumbrance, and have dedicated their lives to spiritual exercises. And amongst

these, some are more vigilant over their conduct, and live with greater purity of conscience than others; some burn with a desire to participate of this holy mystery; others, on the contrary, approach it not without fear and trembling; and if their conscience, the order established in their religion, and the apprehension of being more separated from Almighty God by not communicating, did not press them, they would be seen to come very seldom to the holy table. But I am of opinion, that priests, whose proper office it is to celebrate, being excepted, there are few persons for whom it is not sufficient to communicate once a week, if there be not some particular cause or reason to do otherwise; as if some sickness should happen, or some principal feast, or a pious soul should find itself pressed by some new and extraordinary desire to receive him who alone is capable to moderate and refresh the heat of a heart that burns with his love. It may, in this case, be piously believed that this vehemence and fervor proceed from the Holy Ghost, if other circumstances concur with it; and then it seems that there is reason not to resist it. Experience confirms this conduct, and there have been persons seen whose life was Jesus Christ, in such sort, that if they had not been often fed with this sacred bread, it seemed their corporal life would have failed them, so weak and feeble was their body. It is therefore a good and wholesome thing to prepare one's-self frequently for the receiving this admirable remedy with all the devotion that is due to

it, and after one has received it, to watch over one's-self, and all our actions, with a most exact diligence. From this no one has a right to be exempted, and religious persons, who are particularly dedicated to God, much less than others, if they will obtain and preserve the innocence and purity which this holy sacrament brings. And though a man sometimes feels but little devotion, yet he ought not to forbear coming humbly to this bread of life, putting his whole confidence in God's mercy; and if he judges himself unworthy of it, he must also think that the more infirm and weak he feels himself, the more need he has of the physician; since, as our Saviour himself has said, 'the healthy have no need of a physician, but the sick.' *Matt. ix. 12.* For indeed we go not to Jesus Christ to sanctify him by our holiness, but that he may sanctify us by his. Nor let any one be discouraged when, after having done all that he could, he finds not himself touched with that particular sweetness of devotion he might desire, or if in and after communion he feel no sensible tenderness or zeal; because it is often a particular dispensation of Almighty God, who sometimes deprives his children of this consolation for causes best known to himself." The testimony of this saint ought to be of very great authority, this glorious doctor having been so remarkable as well in learning and holiness, as in the spirit of devotion, which he possessed in a high degree, which made him write on this subject nothing but what he knew by experience.

You see then by the testimony of this father, and by whatsoever else I have hitherto represented to you, the little reason some men have, who, through a superfluous zeal and under pretence of respect, condemn, and proceed even to preach against such persons as frequent the sacraments. Though there were some sort of excess in this, yet there are so many other evils in the world, greater and more dangerous to be apprehended, that they ought not to spend all their strength and learning, as they do, in attacking this alone; especially since things being well considered, it is manifest that the world suffers much more damage by overmuch abstaining from the sacraments, than by too often coming to them. And the better to understand this, you shall observe, according to the doctrine of St. Thomas, (1. 2. q. 64. art. 1.) that as all moral virtues consist in a mean, so they have necessarily two vices which are opposite to them, the one by excess, and the other by defect; though they have not always names by which they may be distinguished: it is the same in the use of the sacraments, and generally in all spiritual exercises there may be either too much or too little. This being true, if we will equitably consider the greater and more to be feared of these two extremities, we shall find that the world undoubtedly suffers far more inconveniences by too much forbearing, than by too much frequenting the sacraments. For supposing there were some fault on this side, yet who cannot but know that the impropriety must be much greater

to see men almost wholly refrain from the sacraments, in which God has placed the remedies of our wounds, and the salvation of our souls? And, in effect, whence comes it that this age is so corrupt, and the life of men so profligate, but from their contempt of this sacrament and voluntary abandoning this bread of life? To be convinced of this, we need only cast our eyes on the difference there is between the present time in which we live, when those that bear the name of Christians communicate but once a year, and the past time of the primitive church, when those who were truly Christians communicated every day: this great difference, brethren, will amaze you, and clearly show you which of these two is the better. Let those then who have a zeal for the glory of God and his church, send forth cries to heaven, and weep for a cause so worthy of tears, to see men so strangely separated from God, and all spiritual exercises, since this separation is truly the source and original of all our miseries.

As magistrates take all imaginable care to procure that nothing may be wanting to the people who are subject to their government, being certain that abundance never discontents them, though they know that excess in diet, and all other conveniences of life, may as well be prejudicial to the public as necessity; so those who bear office in the church are obliged to use more diligence to keep them who are under their charge from falling into a scarcity of spiritual food
a heavenly medicines, than they are to retrench

their excess ; since want is in this case incomparably more dangerous than abundance, and that so much the more, because none can judge of this last, but by their interior, which every one knows not, and it being great rashness to pronounce decrees on an affair the bottom whereof is not known.

I believe that what we have said is more that sufficient to convince you of these truths ; I shall only add here some mediations and prayers for your devotion, before and after the holy communion.

A Meditation before holy Communion, to stir up in the Soul the Fear and Love of the most holy Sacrament.

WHO art thou, O my Lord, and what am I, that I should presume to approach thee ? What is man that he should receive his God ? What is man of himself but a vessel of corruption, and by mortal sin becomes a child of the devil, an heir of hell, an enemy of God, a creature weak to do good, and unhappily powerful to do evil ? What is man ? A creature blind in his designs, vain in his actions, filthy in his desires, inconstant in his purposes, vile and base in all things, and only great in the false esteem he has of himself ! Shall so miserable a creature dare to present himself before the divine Majesty to be united with him ? The stars, O Lord, are not pure in thy sight, the pillars of heaven tremble before thee, the highest seraphim cover themselves

with their wings in the presence of thy greatness, and look on themselves as nothing; (*Job. xxvi. 11.*) how then shall so wretched a creature as I am, attempt to approach thee, and receive thee in the holy eucharist? St. John Baptist, sanctified from his mother's womb, dares not touch thy head, and declares he is not worthy to untie thy shoes; (*Matt. iii. 11.*) the prince of the apostles cries out, and says, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord;" (*Luke v. 8.*) and shall I have the boldness to come near thee, being filled with sins? If in the time of thy ancient law the loaves which were set on the table of thy temple, and were only the shadow of this mystery, might not be eaten but by him that was clean and sanctified, (*1 Kings xxi. 4, 5.*) how shall not I, who am so void of all holiness, dread to eat the bread of angels? Thou, O God, commandest that the paschal lamb should be eaten with unleavened bread, and bitter lettuce, and that the eaters of it should have their shoes on their feet, and their reins girt; (*Exod. xii. 8, &c.*) and shall I dare to eat the true Paschal Lamb, of which the other was but a figure, without having this preparation? Am I that unleavened bread, clear and free from any leaven of malice? Have I in me the sentiments of that true contrition, which was signified by the bitter lettuce? Where is the chastity of my reins, and the cleanness of my feet, which are good desires? I fear, and have great reason to fear at my approach to this holy table, seeing myself void of all these dispo-

sitions. From this table was that wretched man driven, who was found to be without his wedding garment, that is, without charity; and was commanded to be bound hand and foot, and cast into utter darkness. *Matt. xxii. 11, &c.* Nor can I but expect the same punishment, if I present myself to it in the same condition. Divine eyes of my Master, to which all the secrets of our souls lie open, what shall become of me, if I am found thus naked at your banquet? It was so criminal a thing for a priest to have inconsiderately touched the ark of the covenant, which was ready to fall, that he was immediately punished with sudden death; (*2 Kings vi. 6.*) and ought not I to fear the same punishment, if I unworthily receive him who was figured by that ark? The Bethsamites did but too curiously behold the same ark, when it passed through their land, and the Scripture teaches us, that for the expiation of their rashness, God slew fifty thousand of that people. *1 Kings vi. 19.* O most merciful and dread God, how far is thy sacrament above that ark, and how much greater is it to receive thee, than to behold thee! What must I do to lodge within me a God who is greatness and justice itself.

But if I have so great reason to fear, considering only thy majesty, what ought I not to apprehend, if I cast my eyes on my sins? Infinite Beauty, there was a time, and may thy mercy grant that it last not still, when thou wert that of which my heart least thought, and when I had more esteem for the du-

of the creatures than for the treasures of thy grace, and the hope of thy glory: my desires gave law to my life, I blindly obeyed my concupiscences, and I made as little account of thee as if I had never known thee. I was that fool who said in his heart there is no God, (*Psalm* xiii. 1.) because I lived a long time in such a manner as if I believed that there was none. I never did anything for love of thee; I never dreaded thy justice; I never refrained from evil for fear of thy laws; I never gave thee the thanks I ought for thy benefits; and knowing that thou art everywhere, I never abstained from sin in thy presence. I granted my eyes whatsoever they desired, and never used the least resistance to my heart to restrain it from any pleasure. There is no sort of wickedness of which I have not been in a manner culpable; my life has been nothing but a continual opposition and war against thee, and renewing of all the torments thou hast suffered for me. For when I have sometimes communicated, and as soon as my communion was over, began again to offend thee, I treated thee with the same contempt as did the soldiers, who on the one side adored thee with bended knees, and on the other struck thee on the head with a reed. Shall I then, O my Saviour and my Judge, dare to receive thee into an abode so vile, and so full of impurity? Shall I dare to place thy sacred body in a den of dragons and serpents? I know that a soul in which sin dwells is the habitation of the devil, and a cave of wild beasts. Wilt

thou, O virginal purity, and fountain of all beauty, be contented to be lodged in so abominable a place? "What fellowship hath light with darkness, and what concord hath Christ with Belial?" (2 *Cor.* vi. 13, 14.) "Flower of the field, and lily of the valleys," (*Cant.* ii. 1.) wilt thou suffer thyself to be food of beasts? Shall this divine meat be given to dogs, and this precious pearl be cast before swine? (*Matt.* vii. 6.) Lover of pure souls, who feedest among the lilies till the day break, and the shadows fade away, (*Cant.* iv. 5, 6.) what repose can I offer thee in my heart, where, instead of flowers, grow only thorns and thistles? "Thy bed is of the cedar of Libanon, its pillars are of silver, its seat of gold, and its going up of purple." (*Cant.* iii. 9, 10.) I have none of these ornaments; what seat shall I prepare for thee when thou shalt come unto me? Thy sacred body was wrapt in a clean linen cloth, and put in a new sepulchre, in which no man was ever laid before; (*Matt.* xxvii. 59, *Luke* xxiii. 53.) and I see nothing clean or new in my soul, where I may receive thee. My mouth has been an open sepulchre, (*Psalms* v. 9.) whence issued only stench, through the corruption of my sins; my heart is an undrainable source of sinful diseases, and my will the seat and throne of my enemy. Can I then receive thee in this condition, and with my polluted lips give thee the kiss of peace? I am in confusion, seeing myself in this manner, O my Redeemer, and am ashamed, being such as I am, to go into the dwelling of the heavenly

Bridegroom, who vouchsafes to embrace me, and receive me anew.

The Second Part of this Meditation.

I KNOW, O God, my extreme unworthiness, and I know also thy great mercy; it is this gives me the courage to approach thee as I am: for the more unworthy I am, the more thou art glorified in not rejecting so poor and filthy a creature. Thou, O Lord, drivest not sinners away from thee; but, on the contrary, callest and drawest them to thee: thou hast said, "Come unto me all you that labor and are burdened, and I will refresh you." *Matt. xi. 28.* Thou saidst, "The healthy need not the physician, but the sick. I am not come to call the just, but sinners." *Matt. ix. 11, 12.* And of thee it was publicly said, that thou receivedst and didst eat with sinners. Thou art still the same thou then wast, and I believe that thou still at this day callest from the height of heaven, those whom thou hast in thy goodness called on earth. Touched, therefore, with the mercy with which I know that thou callest us, I come unto thee oppressed with sins, to the end it might please thee to ease me. I come with all my miseries and all my temptations, that I may be refreshed. I come as a sick man to the physician, to be cured, and as a sinner to the fountain of justice, to be justified. I learn that thou receivest sinners, that thou eatest with them, and that thy greatest delight is to converse with them, in order to convert

them. If this manner is pleasing to thee, thou seest in me, who am so great a sinner, that a special grace is necessary to convert me. I doubt not, O Lord, but the tears of that public sinner, Mary Magdalen, were more delightful to thee than the Pharisee's sumptuous feast, since thou didst not despise her sorrow, nor reject her as a person defiled with sin; but, on the contrary, didst accept her penance, pardon her offences, defend her against her accusers, and, for the few tears which she shed, didst forgive her abundance of crimes. See here, O Lord, an opportunity to acquire thee greater glory, a sinner that brings to thy feet more iniquities, and fewer tears. Thou showest on that occasion neither the first nor last of thy mercies; thou hadst before done many such, and thou wilt yet do many that will not be less remarkable. Let that which I hope for be one of this number. Pardon this wretch, who has more unworthily offended thee, and yet has not so much sorrow for his offences: I have not tears enough to wash thy feet, but thou hast shed as much blood as is sufficient to wash away all the sins of the world. Enter not into indignation against me, because, being such a one as thou seest me, I presume, nevertheless, to come near thee. Remember that thou disdainest not that poor woman, sick of an issue of blood, when she cast herself at thy feet, to be cured of her infirmity by touching the hem of thy garment, but, on the contrary, didst comfort her, and didst give her courage, saying to her "Be of good

heart, daughter; thy faith hath made thee whole." *Matt.* ix. 22. I am afflicted with a more dangerous and more incurable disease than her's; what then can I do else but address myself to thee, as to the most powerful of all remedies for the recovery of my health? Thou art no less merciful on earth for being glorious in heaven; for didst thou there exercise another office, or hadst thou changed thy nature, we should need another gospel to teach us this difference. Thy word is unchangeable, and it is by that I know how all sick persons ran to thee, that they might touch thee, because out of thee issued forth a virtue that cured them. The leprous came to thee; thou stretchedst forth thy hand, and they were cleansed: the blind, the deaf, the paralytic, those that were possessed with devils, and, in fine, all that were afflicted with the strangest maladies, had recourse to thee, and thou never refusedst them thy assistance. In thee is health, life, and the remedy of all diseases; thou art as merciful to will our health as thou art powerful to give it. Thus, O Lord, to whom can we have recourse in our necessities, but to thee?

I acknowledge, indeed, that this divine sacrament is not only food for the strong, but also medicine for the sick; that it is not only the support of the living, but the resurrection also of the dead; that it not only fills the just with love and joy, but cleanses also and cures the sinner. Let every one approach it, as he can, and let every one take there what is fit for

him, and what his Lord will give him ; let the just come to be fed at this table, and let the voice of their confession and praise be heard at this sacred festival ; as for me, who am a sinner and sick, “ I will take the chalice of salvation.” (*Psalm cxv. 13.*) There is no way in the christian life, by which I can walk out of this sacred mystery, and I see not the least pretence to excuse me from desiring the participation of it. If I am sick, this will cure me ; if I am in health, this will preserve me ; if I live, this will strengthen me ; if I am dead, this will raise me again to life ; if I am heated with divine love, this will more inflame me ; and if I am cold, this will heat me. I will not lose courage for that I am blind, because our Lord enlightens the blind ; (*Psalm cxiv. 8.*) nor will I think myself without remedy for that I am fallen, since our Lord raises those who are fallen to the ground. I will not fly from his presence, as Adam did when he knew his nakedness, for as much as he has the power to cover mine. I will not hide me from him, because I see myself unclean, and all over defiled with sins, since he is the inexhaustible fountain of mercy ; and my poverty shall not hinder me from coming to him, because he is the master and dispenser of all created things. I do not believe I shall do him any injury in this ; on the contrary, the more miserable I am, the more remarkable occasion do I think to give him of making his mercy admired by exercising it on me. The scales which covered his eyes who was born blind,

served only to make God's glory appear in him with greater lustre ; and the lowness to which I am reduced will render more conspicuous the goodness of him who, being so great and so exalted, disdains not the meanest and most contemptible things ; especially since my merits obtain not so great a privilege, but it is granted me in consideration of those of Jesus Christ my Lord, for whose sake the eternal Father adopts me, and treats me as one of his children. Since then thou art my Father and my Saviour, I presume to have recourse to thee, and beg of thee this grace, that as David admitted one that was lame to his table, because he was son to his dear friend Jonathan, honoring thereby the merits of the father in the person of the son ; so it may please thee, O eternal Father ! to suffer at thy table a wretched and deformed sinner, not for his own sake, but for the merits of Jesus Christ, whom thou hast so much loved, who is our second Adam, and true Father, and who lives and reigns with thee for ever. *Amen.*

A Prayer after Communion, made by St. Thomas of Aquin.

I GIVE thee thanks, O Holy Lord, Almighty Father, and Eternal God ! for all the benefits thou hast so bountifully bestowed on me, and particularly for that it has pleased thee, for no merits of mine, but through the sole condescension of thy mercy, to replenish me a sinner, thy unworthy servant, with the precious body of thy only Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.

Suffer not, I beseech thee, this holy communion to render me guilty, and liable to the punishment which those deserve who come unworthily to it; but grant, on the contrary, that it may powerfully intercede for the remission of my sins. Let it be a rampart to preserve me in the faith, and a shield to repel the darts of the enemy, who ceases not to attack my will, that he may turn it against thee. Let it destroy all my vices, root out all my sensual desires, and augment in me patience, charity, true humility, and all other virtues; let it settle a firm and solid peace in my soul, and strongly defend me against all the assaults and stratagems of my visible and invisible enemies; let it unite me strictly to thee during this life, and make me happily end in thee; so that, in fine, it may please thee to receive me, a sinner, to that unspeakable banquet, where thou art the true light, where thou fully satisfiest thy elect, and where thou thyself art their joy, and their perfect felicity, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

A Meditation after Communion.

O Most gracious and most merciful God, what thanks can I render to thee, who, being King of Kings and Lord of Lords, hast this day vouchsafed to visit my soul, to enter into my house, and to make thyself one thing with me, by the inestimable virtue of this holy sacrament! How shall I acknowledge

this honor? What shall I return thee for this benefit, and what thanks canst thou receive of so poor and weak a creature, for so rich and precious a gift? For thou art not content in this admirable mystery to make us partakers of thy sovereign divinity, but hast communicated to us also thy humanity, and all the merits thou hast gained us by it. Thou hast given us herein thy flesh and thy blood, and hast therewith admitted us to a share in all the wealth and riches thou hast purchased both by the one and by the other. O wonderful communication! O incomparable gift, little indeed understood by men, but worthy to be celebrated with eternal praises! O Redeemer of our souls! couldst thou bestow on them any other treasure which might be comparable to this? Thy words were as full of truth as of love, when in thy prayer thou saidst to thy Father, "I sanctify myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth." *John xvii. 19.* O new manner of sanctifying, which costs the sanctifier so dear! It is thou that bearest holiness, it is I who reap the fruit of it; thou becomest poor, and I grow rich; thou sufferedst the punishment, and I receive the pardon. In fine, thou sheddest even to the last drop of thy blood, and I recover health and life by it. Those terrible sorrows which thou hast endured, those buffets, those thorns, those nails, and that precious blood which thou hast shed, have satisfied the heavenly Father for me. Thy tears have washed me, thy wounds have cured me, and the stripes thou receivedst, have paid

for me. Happy communication ! wonderful fellowship for those who have contracted it, since it renders such unspeakable treasures common to them ! What have we brought of our's, to be partakers of them ? What have we given to receive such great things ? It is an effect of thy sole grace and goodness. The sun enlightens, the fire warms, the water refreshes, because it is their nature to produce these effects, and it is thine, O Lord, to show mercy and to pardon ; but what is most admirable, to pardon others, and suffer thyself ! Thy very nature is goodness, an infinite goodness, a sovereign goodness ; and it is the property of a sovereign goodness to communicate itself sovereignly. It is thus that thou hast dealt with us, since thou hast given thyself entirely to us. Thou wert born in the world to become our brother ; thou hast instituted the blessed eucharist to be our food ; thou hast suffered death to be the ransom of that which we deserved ; and thou reignest in heaven to be our recompense.

In fine, my soul, to speak in one word, if thou wilt all at once comprehend the benefits thou obtainest when thou receivest this divine sacrament, consider that which our Lord brought to the world when he came into it ; for as descending down on earth he gave us the life of grace, with whatever else accompanies it ; so giving himself to thee by this way, he gives thee the same life. O blessed nourishment, by which the children of men become children of God, and by which our humanity dies happily, that

God may live in it! O bread, full of sweetness, and worthy our admiration, which nourishes the soul, and not the flesh; which strengthenest the heart, and burdenest not the body; which rejoicest the mind, without distracting the understanding; which, by thy virtue, stiflest sensuality, and destroyest in us our human will, that the divine may reign in its stead.

What thanks can I then give thee, O my Lord, if the thanks ought to bear some proportion to the greatness of the benefit? I learn in Exodus, that thou commandest Moses to take a vessel of gold, to fill it with manna, and to lay it up in the ark of the testament, that it might be there kept, to put all the posterity of the Israelites in mind with what sort of nourishment their fathers were fed during forty years in the desert. If thou wouldst then have so great a value to be set on that corruptible food, and appointedst that it should be kept as an eternal monument in a place of so great veneration, what esteem ought not we to make of this incorruptible meat, which gives eternal life to those who receive it worthily? I clearly see that there is as much difference between the first and second benefit, and consequently between the acknowledgment which is due to them: that food was earthly, this is heavenly; that fed only bodies, this nourishes souls; that gave not true life to those that did eat of it, this gives eternal life to those who feed on it; and, in fine, there cannot be any comparison between them since these two meats

are as different as the creature is from the Creator. If thou nevertheless, O my Saviour, wouldst that the memory of this first favor should never be abolished, but that the people should pay thee a perpetual homage for having preserved their lives by this corruptible and perishable manna; what oughtest thou to expect from us, to whom thou hast given eternal life by this heavenly and divine bread? Man is too weak to give thee thanks for it, and it would be a rashness to think of finding in this life the praises we owe thee. There remains then in my inability no other remedy for the acquitting myself of my duty, but to have recourse to thee thyself, and say to thee with thy prophet, "I will take the chalice of salvation, and will invoke the name of the Lord;" (*Psalms* cxv. 13.) that is, I will pay my debts by new obligations, and beg of thee new favors for the sake of the first. I beseech thee then, O Lord, that thou wilt be pleased to accept this venerable sacrament in satisfaction for all my faults and all my sins, and to obtain the entire and perfect amendment of my life; repair by it all my falls, and supply by it all the defects which spring from my misery; destroy in me by it whatsoever may be displeasing to thy divine eyes, and make me one according to thy will; grant me by it that I may strongly adhere to thee, perfectly and constantly love thee, and continue united in thee, to the honor and glory of thy name. Show mercy to all sinners; bring back to thy church all those whom heresy and schism have separated from

it; enlighten all the faithful to know thee better; succor all those that are in trouble and affliction; assist all those for whom I am obliged to offer thee my prayers; comfort those who have given me birth and education, my kinsfolk, benefactors, friends, and enemies; take pity on all those for whom thou hast shed thy blood; pardon the living, and fill them with thy graces, and grant to the dead rest and eternal glory: who livest and reignest world without end.
Amen.

A Meditation for one to exercise himself in on the day of Holy Communion, in considering the greatness of this Mystery, and giving thanks to our Lord for this incomparable Benefit.

WERE all creatures, both in heaven and earth, to join themselves with me to give thee thanks for the benefit I come now from receiving, yet they would not, O my God, be able to perform it as it merits. What praises, O my Saviour, shall I give thee, for having on this happy day vouchsafed to visit me, comfort me, and favor me with thy presence! When the mother of the precursor, filled with the Holy Ghost, saw entering into her house the Virgin who bore thee in her womb, amazed at so great a wonder, she cried out, "Whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?" (*Luke i. 43.*) What ought I then to do, who am but a worm of the earth, seeing that my mouth has received, and my

stomach contained a consecrated host, in which is comprehended the same God who came to visit St. Elizabeth? With how much more reason may I cry out, whence is this extraordinary favor befallen me, that not only the mother of my God, but my God himself and the sovereign Lord of all things, has been pleased to come to me, who have so long been the habitation of Satan; to me, who have so often offended him; to me, who have so often opposed his will, and by my so frequently rejecting him, rendered myself unworthy to receive him? Whence, then, have I this favor, that the King of Kings and Lord of Lords is come to me? that he whose throne is in heaven, whose "footstool is on earth," (*Psalms* xcvi. 1.) whose officers are angels, whose praises are published by the stars of the morning, and whose power governs the whole earth, should so far abase himself as to come into so contemptible a place? Thou, O my King, wouldst be born in a stable amongst beasts, wouldst be delivered into the hands of sinners, and descend even to hell. It well appears, O my God, that thou art not changed, and that thou retainest the same love for sinners, since thou still dost every day what thou once didst for them.

Had thy goodness condescended to come unto me in any other manner, it had still been an effect of thy very great mercy: but now, O Lord, that thou hast not only been pleased to visit me, but hast also vouchsafed to enter under my roof, to dwell in me,

to transform me into thee, and make me one and the same thing with thyself, by so admirable a union, that thy sacred mouth has found nothing more fit to express it, than to compare it with the union which thou hast with thy Almighty Father: this is what far surpasses, and is altogether incomprehensible to human understanding. . David wondered at thy care of man, when he said, "What is man that thou art mindful of him?" (*Psalms* viii. 5.) But it is far more to be admired, that God not only remembers man, but that he makes himself man for him, that he dwells with him, that he dies for him, that he feeds him with his own flesh and blood, and makes himself one and the same thing with him. Solomon begged of God, if it were possible, that he would actually reside in the temple he had been so many years building; but it is a much greater wonder that God, who dwells in the heavens, should, after a far more excellent manner, make his abode in a poor soul, who has scarcely labored so much as one only day to prepare him a lodging. All created nature is wrapt with admiration to see God made man; to see him descend from heaven to earth, and continue nine months enclosed in a virgin's womb. These indeed are wonderful things, and fit to be admired; but it is also true, that the womb of this virgin was filled with the Holy Ghost, that it was purer than the stars of heaven, and so a lodging made worthy of the Son of God. But that this Lord should dwell in my heart. that he would choose for his ha-

bitation a place so filthy and full of darkness, is the highest and most amazing excess to which his mercy could descend. Let the angels then bless thee, O my Lord, for so excellent a favor, and so incomparable a mercy. Thou well showest that thou art the supreme Good, since thou vouchsafest so perfectly to communicate thyself, and hast invented so admirable a means to render us partakers of thy goodness.

But how far ought our admiration and our acknowledgment to extend, if we consider what the new benefit is, and what the privilege, which this divine sacrament brings us! What does the church teach me of the happiness that befalls me, and the good thou dost me in this venerable mystery? I have here a seal marked with thy name, for an inviolable assurance that thou art my Father, and not only my Father, but also the Bridegroom of my soul, since I understand that the principal effect of this sacrament is to entertain our souls with spiritual delights, and to make them one and the same thing. If it be so, and if the heart is to be judged by the works, who can doubt but that thou discoverest to us, in this admirable work, a fatherly heart, and art indeed a Father? Masters are not wont to use caresses towards their servants, but fathers towards their children; and that principally while they are yet little, and whilst they love them with most tenderness; for it is the father's goodness to give them in that age, not only what is necessary for their life, but also for their recreation. Thou didst not here-

tofore treat thy people in this manner; thou dealest with them like a lord and master; thou kept this great effect of thy love a long time concealed from the world and delayedst the discovery of it till the time of thy coming on earth, with the happy tidings of the gospel. Thus, in all thy other sacraments, and in all thy other benefits, thou hast only shown me that thou art my King, my Saviour, my Pastor, my Physician; but in this, in which thou wouldst after so high a manner unite thyself to my soul, and love her with such wonderful tenderness, thou hast very clearly made known, that thou art my Bridegroom, that thou art my Father, and such a father as loves his children with incomparable goodness. This is what I manifestly discern, and this is what all the favors thou showest me in this sacrament sufficiently teach me. There is no deceit in thy works as they show outwardly, so they are inwardly; for by the effects I know the cause,—by the works I judge what is the heart; and thou canst not treat me with so much indulgence and sweetness, without having for me a true fatherly heart. If the manna, in which were found all sorts of tastes, and whatsoever the mouth could desire most agreeable and delicious, was a mark of thy affection, and the tenderness of thy heart towards thy first-born children; what must the love be which thou at this day bearest us, since thou so liberally givest us thy divine manna, which as far exceeds the manna of the desert in sweetness, as heaven is above the earth! O celes-

tial nourishment, bread of life, fountain of delight, vein of all virtues, death of all vices, fire of divine love, medicine of health, refection of souls, health of spirits, royal and divine banquet, and admirable taste of eternal felicity ! What shall I say then, O my God ? What thanks can I give thee ? With what excess of love can I acknowledge so extraordinary a benefit ? If, being what thou art, thou so lovest a vile creature, who is less than a worm of the earth, how should not I love thee, O my God, who, with all thy greatness, and all thy majesty, condescendedst to be the bridegroom of my soul ! Let me love thee, then, O Lord ; let me desire thee above all things ; be thou my meat and my drink. O delightful sweetness ! O love, whose pleasure is inestimable ! let my soul feed on thee, and let my heart be filled with thy delights ! O food more delicious than whatsoever is most pleasing on earth ! meat of the strong ! make me to grow in thee ; augment what thy presence gives to me, that I may be worthy happily to enjoy thee ! Children of Adam, blind men, what is it you do ? What do you pretend to in the world ? If you seek love, here is the noblest and sweetest that can be desired. If you look for pleasures, where will you find so great or so pure as these ? If you aim at wealth, here is the treasure of heaven, the price of the world, and an ocean of riches ; in fine, if you aspire to honors, you will find here **all the majesty of God, who comes to honor you.**

The Second Part of this Meditation.

SINCE thou hast already done me the favor to receive me into thy company, to place me at thy table, to give me share of thy banquet, to heap on me thy benefits, to bind me to thee with such strong and strait bonds of love, I from this time, O my Saviour, renounce all earthly things for love of thee. Let there be no longer any world for me, or any worldly vanity; begone from me ye deceitful goods, which I have so much loved; here is the only and sovereign good. It is not reasonable that, having tasted the bread of angels, I should return to the food of beasts; it is not fit that, having received God into my house, I should let any thing vain or unprofitable enter into it. Should a woman of mean condition be married to a king, she would soon leave that state of poverty which environed her, to appear in the equipage of a queen. This ought my soul to imitate, for, having been exalted to the dignity in which this august sacrament has placed her, how can she again debase herself to the infamous condition to which her old habits had reduced her? How can she open that heart to worldly thoughts, into which she has already received the Lord of the World? How can she lodge in herself any profane thing, having been consecrated by the divine presence? Solomon could not consent that his wife, who was daughter to king Pharaoh, should dwell in his house at Jerusalem, because the ark of the testament had sometime reposed in it. 2 Paral. viii. 11. If this

so wise and understanding a king would not permit his lawful wife, who was a princess of so great quality, to inhabit a palace where the ark of God had a little while remained, only because this princess was descended of a heathen family, can I suffer anything that is wicked and heathenish in a heart where God himself would stay? What a disorder would it be, that impious desires should be still found in a place where God has made his abode; or that a mouth, through which he has graciously condescended to pass, should utter filthy words! Solomon having once sacrificed in the porch of the temple, ordained that it should remain sanctified, and never after be put to any profane use; (3 *Kings* viii. 64.) is it not much more fit that my soul should be now a holy place, since it has had the happiness to receive him, of whom all the sacrifices and all the sacraments of the old law were but the figure?

Since it has pleased thee, O my Saviour, to favor me with thy visit, grant me the grace to correspond in some sort to this favor; thou never conferredst an extraordinary gift on any one without granting him powerful assistance to preserve it; and if, by thy adorable presence, I have received from thee a gift which surpasses all others, let thy sovereign power sanctify me, that I may be able to sanctify my obligations. Wheresoever thou hast entered, thou hast shown this merciful benevolence. Thou enteredst into the chaste womb of thy mother, and as thou thereby exaltedst her to the highest glory, so thou

at the same time gavest her the greatest grace to maintain it. Being yet enclosed within this sanctuary, thou enteredst into the house of St. Elizabeth, and there by thy presence sanctifiedst her child, gavest him heavenly joy, and filledst his mother with thy spirit. Thou enterest into the world to converse with men, and as by thy coming on earth thou raisedst them to a wonderful degree of glory, so by a wonderful grace thou repairedst their faults, and sanctifiedst them when they were wicked. And, in fine, thou descendedst into hell, and of hell thou madest a paradise, rendering those happy by thy presence whom thou honoredst with thy visit. Nor hast thou, O Lord, only wrought these wonders when personally present: the ark of the testament entered into the house of Obedom, and immediately thou pouredst forth all thy benedictions on it, and on whatsoever belonged to that good Israelite. Since then it has pleased thee, through a greater mercy, to enter into so poor a dwelling as that of my soul; since it has pleased thee to abide in it, begin to bless thy servant's house, and grant me grace to answer this favor; enrich and adorn the place of thy habitation, and render it fitting for thee: thou wouldst have me to be like that happy sepulchre in which thy sacred body was laid; give me, therefore, the qualities that were observed to be in it. That sepulchre was of stone, give me firmness; there was in it a shroud, grant me the humility represented by it, since it is so necessary for me; myrrh was also found there, which

is the symbol of mortification ; make me die to all my irregular desires, and to my own will, that I may live only to thee. By establishing thy abode in me, thou wouldst have me be as the ark of the testament ; grant me, therefore, this favor, that, as the ark contained nothing but the tables of the law, my heart may entertain no thoughts or desires but of conforming itself entirely to thy law. Thou lettest me know by the effects of this great sacrament that thou art my Father, since thou treatest me in it as thy child ; but being thy child, give me thy grace, that I may worthily correspond to this benefit, by loving thee not only with a strong and solid love, but also with a love full of tenderness. Let all my interior powers melt and be absorbed in thy love, and let the sole remembrance of thy so sweet and so amiable name make all the joy of my heart. Give it the sentiments of a true child, that is, the obedience, love, and respect which are due to thee as its father. Let all my hope and confidence be in thee, and let me in all the troubles and afflictions of this life have recourse to thee, like a good son who casts himself into his father's arms, where he finds his most assured refuge. But, above all, thou wouldst discover to me in this divine mystery, that thou hadst for my soul all the love that a bridegroom can have for his bride : give me the same heart for thee ; let my affections answer thine ; let my love be like thine, faithful, chaste, and tender ; and let it be so strong and powerful, that nothing may ever separate me from thee. It

was to form so strict a union as this that thou ordainest this holy sacrament. Thou knowest that the creature is much better in thee than in itself; that it has from thee all its strength and power; that it is of itself only misery and weakness; that without thee it is lost, like a drop of water, which being left alone in the air, is dried up in a moment; but being thrown into the sea, and united with its beginning, abides for ever. Draw me then, O my Lord, from myself, and receive me unto thee, because with thee I find life; and with myself I find death. I become strong if I am with thee; and if I am left to myself, I abate, and am lost: being with thee, I obtain a firm and stable condition; and of myself I am only vanity and corruption. Depart not then from me, O good Jesus, depart not, O Lord, but, “stay with us, because it is towards evening, and the day is now far spent;” (*Luke* xxiv. 29.) and since I have been so happy as to lodge thee this day in my house, where I may treat with thee alone about the concerns of my soul, I will not lose this favorable opportunity, “I will not let thee go except thou bless me.” *Gen.* xxxii. 26. Change my old name, and give me a new one; that is, a new being, and a new manner of life. Let the love of the world grow weaker in me every day, and let the love of thee increase, or rather grow daily stronger as long as I shall live, to the end that all the desires of this world being extinct and dead to me, I may live to thee alone. O my Saviour, I desire thee alone, I think on thee alone;

let me abide with thee alone, let all my thoughts and cares respect thee alone; to thee alone let me have recourse in all my troubles, and let me expect and receive assistance from none but thee alone, **who** livest and reignest world without end. *Amen.*

END OF THE THIRD BOOK.

A Memorial of a Christian Life.

BOOK IV.

CONTAINING

TWO PRINCIPAL RULES OF A CHRISTIAN LIFE.

PREFACE.

AFTER you shall be converted to God with your whole heart, and shall have seriously endeavored to purify your soul by these two great sacraments of which we have treated, it remains that you speedily set yourself to amend your imperfections, and regulate your life. For this purpose, therefore, I design to give you the following counsels; and as nature, in the production of her works, goes always from the lesser to the greater, that is, from what is of less to what is of greater perfection, so grace ordinarily does the same. Wherefore I will keep this order in the instruction I purpose to give you on this subject, establishing two rules and two manners of living well; one for those who are newly converted, and desire to be saved; the other for such as, besides this, aspire to a higher perfection, and endeavor daily to go forward in the way of virtue.

For the better comprehending my intent, you shall observe, that all the instruction conducing to a good life, is, by the prophet David, divided into two principal parts; the one of avoiding evil, and the other of doing good; (*Psalms* xxxiii. 14.) that is, the one consists in banishing vices from our souls, and the other in adorning them with virtues. I see not in this matter any division more perfect or clearer than this, because that by observing these two things, one becomes a new man and a new creature, destroying by the first the image of the old man, and forming by the second that of the new. Thus you render yourself supernatural and divine creatures; since as man was created for a supernatural and divine end, which is to see God in his glory; so the life which disposes to this end is divine and supernatural, according to that maxim of philosophy, that the end and the means ought to be proportioned, and be of one and the same order. And although these two things are, as well in practice as in precept, inseparable, since vices cannot be overcome but by the help of virtues, nevertheless, the better to distinguish what I intend to teach you, and give it more light, I will, as much as I can, separate the one from the other. It is requisite also to observe, that of the things which are proposed both in this discourse and others that treat of piety, some are of obligation, and others of free choice and perfection; that is, some are of precept, as the commandments of God and the Church; and others are of counsel, as all the good advice and exhortations

contained in Holy Scripture, which conduce to the better observing of what is commanded, and to the arriving at a greater perfection. It is of very great importance to give you this instruction at first, that you may understand what is absolutely necessary, and what depends on choice alone, and, therefore, know your duties, for greater care must be taken to perform what is of obligation than what is voluntary; and the first must never be left for the second, the contrary being a very great error and disorder, yet such as does but too frequently happen. Wherefore, I shall, in the beginning of this book, very briefly declare the things that are of obligation; and shall afterwards add many others, which may help you more easily to perform these first and indispensable duties, and bring you to obtain a higher perfection; for though it is true that the keeping of the commandments is sufficient to salvation, yet in the way of God, to continue in the same state, and say it is enough, is to go backward; wherefore, besides the essential things, and such as are absolutely necessary, I shall adjoin many others that are useful and profitable, for the sake of such aspiring souls as desire daily to grow and increase in virtue.

CHAPTER I.

The First Rule of a Christian Life, treating of the Victory over Sin, and the Means to destroy it.

IF you desire then, with all your heart, to give yourself to God and to save your soul, know, before all things, that the most important part of this affair, in comparison of which all others whatsoever are as nothing, consists in one only point; which is, to form in your soul a firm resolution never to commit any mortal sin on any occasion whatever, either for the sake of wealth, honor, or life itself, or any other thing in the world. And as a virtuous woman, or an officer in an army, is always fully determined rather to die than to be guilty of the least infidelity, the one against her husband, and the other against his prince; so you, as being true Christians, ought to be firmly resolved rather to lose all things, even your own lives, than to consent to so great a treason as is committed against God by a mortal sin. The reason of this is, because, as St. Paul says, the end and principal aim of the Christian religion is charity, which consists in loving God and our neighbor, (1 *Tim.* i. 5.) to which nothing is so directly opposite as mortal sin; inso-much that he who commits it not, essentially fulfills the law of charity. Our Lord himself taught us this by the answer he gave to the young man in the gospel; that the faithful keeping of the commandments is the way to heaven, and the means to obtain eter-

nal life; (*Matt.* xix. 17.) and we know, that not to commit any mortal sin is to keep them, since no man sins mortally but by transgressing these commandments, and consequently that God's law and man's salvation consist essentially in this point, in keeping inviolably the commandments of God and those prescribed to us by the church.

This is, in a few words, the summary, or rather the principal and total of what a good Christian is bound to do, the which is sufficient for his salvation; but because it is not so easy as may be imagined fully to discharge this obligation, and that, on the contrary, we ordinarily meet with very great impediments on the part of the world, which is full of snares and dangers; on the part of the flesh, whose inclinations bring us to evil; and on the part of the devil, who daily makes war upon us; you ought to be continually on your guard against these enemies, and endeavor to subdue them by the assistance of the virtues which will facilitate your conquest over them. Of this we are now going to treat, and shall particularly note to you such things as may be serviceable to you in attaining them.

SECTION I.

THE first is, to consider attentively what a strange evil mortal sin is, by taking a thorough and particular view of its deformity and injustice, since it dares to attack a God from whom we have received such precious benefits, and to whom we are by so many

titles so strictly bound. There is no Christian but acknowledges that God is the lord and master of all things; that he is their beginning and their end; that from him proceed universally all our goods; that he is an immense ocean of all perfections; that it is he who created all men, who redeemed and sanctified them, who continually preserves them, and, in fine, prepares for them eternal glory and happiness. As his benefits are innumerable, so are our obligations; and we forego all these benefits and duties at one and the same time, when we are so unhappy as to commit a mortal sin. This made William, bishop of Paris, say, that in one only mortal sin are found, after a manner, the deformities of all the mortal sins in the world; and he adds, that this detestable sin is a kind of spiritual rebellion, because the man who suffers himself to be carried away by it, revolts against his sovereign; he puts the keys of his heart, that is, his own soul, into his enemy's hands by way of homage, and makes himself his vassal. Mortal sin is also in some sort a sacrilege, since it profanes the living temple of our heart, which was consecrated to God; it is a crime of apostacy, since it makes us leave God's side, and betake ourselves to the devil's, whose works we had renounced by baptism. It is a spiritual adultery, since it causes a soul that had become the spouse of Christ, to abandon herself treacherously to all the creatures which she particularly loves. It is a theft, since man, belonging in so many ways to God, steals himself from his

service, and deprives him of what so lawfully pertains to him. In fine, since we are obliged to give God all the honor, respect obedience, fidelity, and, in general, all the homages that are due to all creatures, of what condition so ever they are, and much more than this ; it necessarily follows, that one only sin against him infinitely surpasses all the other faults and offences that may be committed in the world. Wherefore, with very great reason, does a holy doctor cry out against this monster in these terms : “ O evil, not sufficiently understood, which takest from Almighty God the respect that is due to him, which contemnest his majesty, which injurest his greatness, which extinguishest virtue, which destroyest grace, which withdrawest us from the Sovereign Good, which makest us lose eternal happiness, which darkenest the understanding, which disorderest the will, which art the most deadly poison of the devil, which engagest thy followers to the pains of hell, which art the destroyer of the world, the infallible guide of perdition, the death of the sinner, the malignant seed of Satan, and the gate of hell, and which makest men delirious : abominable sin, which art the net and snare wherein the unwary suffer themselves to be caught ; which art the plague of souls, which makest men become imitators of the wicked spirits ; horrible darkness, intolerable stench, extremest of all filthiness, vileness, lower than which nothing can be imagined ; cruel beast, greatest of all

miseries, and in fine, cause and original of all our evils !”

This is one of the principal considerations that may excite in you a true hatred of sin. Reflect seriously on it, and make use also, for the same effect, of the others I have set before you in the second book of penance ; as, to represent to yourself what you lose by sin, how much God abhors it, and the extreme outrage you commit against him, when you fear not to offend him. I mention not the rest, to avoid repetitions.

SECTION II.

THE second means to advance in virtue, is carefully to avoid the occasions which may make you fall into sin. I put in this rank, gaming, ill company, dangerous conversations, over-much talking, and particularly too frequent discourse and familiarity with women, how honest and virtuous soever. For if man becomes so weak by sin, that of himself, and through his own misery, he falls and sins every moment, without any one provoking him to it, what can he promise for himself if occasion solicits him, and he is stirred up by the presence of the object, and the opportunity to sin ? Fly then carefully all these sorts of occasions, if you desire to be God’s true servants, and assure yourselves that, commonly speaking, we are so far good as we avoid the occasions of evil. Remember that David was a holy man, but the sight of a woman, and the opportunity

he had to sin, made him fall, which he ceased not to bewail all his life. Remember his son Solomon, who was the wisest of all men, and so highly favored by God, that he was termed our Lord's well-beloved, and yet through the same occasion fell into the strangest of all abandonments. God had commanded the Jews not to marry with strange women, for fear they might corrupt their religion, and make them adore their idols. Solomon, thinking himself secure from this danger, married many such, and loved them so vehemently, that he was by their artifices persuaded to build temples to their idols, and adore them. This is a crime that you will scarce believe, and which ought to make us tremble; yet it is true, and by it did this prince, so renowned for wisdom, ruin himself, and all his posterity was deprived of his kingdom. Who then can esteem himself safe amongst occasions, when they overthrew these two great men, one of whom was so holy, and the other so wise! Shun then the occasions as you would the sin itself; and if you find yourself drawn by custom, or by pleasure, to any one that is dangerous, return into yourself, and say to your heart, Wretch as thou art, if thou canst not now resist a single desire, which sways thee on this occasion, how wilt thou be able to surmount its power, and avoid the danger it casts thee into, when it shall be strengthened by the presence of the object thou art going to seek! Remember also that it is to tempt God, and

render yourself unworthy his assistance, if you do not, on your part, what you ought to deserve it.

But amongst these temptations, the most ordinary is, undoubtedly, the company of wicked persons; the world is so full of them that one can scarce go a step without meeting them; keep yourself from them, if you desire not to sin. A mad dog and a viper, ready to burst with poison, are nothing near so dangerous as ill company; and it is manifest, as the apostle teaches us, that "Evil communication corrupts good manners." 1 *Cor.* xv. 33. Engrave then on your heart this saying of the wise man, "He that walks with the wise, shall be wise; a friend of fools, shall become like unto them:" (*Prov.* xiii. 20. &c.) and again, "He that toucheth pitch, shall be defiled with it; and he that hath fellowship with the proud, shall put on pride." *Eccles.* xviii. 1. Let parents especially cause their children carefully to keep themselves thus reserved; and let masters and governors take the same care of the youth committed to their charge; otherwise they will see all the benefit of their education, and the labors of many years, lost in a moment.

SECTION III.

THE third advice is, to repel betimes the first assaults, and shake off immediately the least evil thought, before it get possession of your heart; for thus you will resist with greater ease, and more merit: whereas, delaying ever so little, you will find

more difficulty in opposing the mischief, and commit a new sin, which will be at least venial, and may sometimes prove mortal. Consider that the fire which does but just begin to kindle, is easily quenched, and the plant which was but lately set, is not hard to be plucked up again; but if the flame is once spread, and the plant once rooted, then the fire will not be put out, nor the root pulled up, without abundance of labor. A town may, without much difficulty, be defended before the enemies are got into it; but when they have once found the means to make a breach and take possession of it, it will be hard to drive them out again. When a stone is yet on the top of a mountain, it may with ease be stayed there, but if it once begin to roll, it will be almost impossible to resist the violence which carries it. These comparisons are common, yet to me they seem fit to show, that as evil thoughts are without any great labor overcome, when they are resisted at the beginning, so it is difficult to master them when they have once taken root in our heart. Now the best and speediest way to resist them, of what quality soever they are, is, as soon as ever they shall attack you, to set before the eyes of your soul Jesus Christ crucified, with all the anguish and sorrow that encompassed him on the cross, the streams of blood which ran down from all his body, and all the wounds and stripes that appeared on it; to reflect on all the torments which he suffered for the destruction of sin, and to say to him: Is it possible that thy Majesty

should have put itself in this condition, to the end I might not sin, and that, nevertheless, I should not cease to offend thee? Remove from me, O Lord, this unhappiness through thy infinite mercy, and for the sake of that precious blood which thou hast shed for me. Help me, O my God, and forsake me not, since thou art my only support, and to none but thee can I have recourse. When this shall befall you, if you shall be alone, it will be good also to make speedily the sign of the cross upon your heart; for this exterior action, accompanied with piety, has often force enough to drive away the interior impression which disquiets you.

St. Bernard writes, that a certain religious woman of his time was wont frequently to perform this holy action, and that her grave being opened some years after her death, the finger with which she had so often made this venerable sign was found still whole, though the rest of her body was consumed. Another doctor writes, that there died at Strasburg, a prior of St. Dominick's order, who had the same devotion, and that some years after, his grave being also opened, there was seen engraven on the bones which covered the region of the heart, the perfect figure of a cross, the foot of which was pointed, the three uppermost parts ending in flower-de-luces; God being willing to show, by this exterior mark, that purity and chastity were preserved in this holy soul, by the remembrance and power of the sign of the cross, which this holy man often made on his breast,

to drive away the temptations of the enemy. This doctor bears witness of this wonder, as of a thing he had seen with his own eyes, affirming that he travelled forty miles only to be a spectator of it. I have related these two memorable examples, to let you see how much Jesus Christ favors those who are mindful of his sufferings, and to stir you up to make use of this remedy, to the end you may obtain his grace.

SECTION IV.

THE fourth is, to examine your conscience every evening, before you go to bed: consider attentively wherein you have sinned that day, in thought, word, or deed, and particularly reflect on all the discourses in which you may possibly have offended. If you have told any lie; if you wished the devil may have power over any of God's creatures; if you have cursed any one; if you have spoken any immodest, slanderous, hasty, choleric words, or any other of that nature. As to your thoughts, if you have speedily and earnestly rejected such as have come upon you against chastity, or any other virtue; on the contrary, if you have staid in them, and if you have not immediately shaken out of your bosom these sparkles of hell-fire. And as for deeds, look with more exactness into the obligations of your condition with those of your house and family, and observe how you have acquitted yourself of them. This exercise has been often recommended to us by the holy fathers, amongst whom, to give you an instance, I have made choice

of Eusebius Emisenus, who, in one of his *nomilies*, has these words: "Let every man daily see his conscience before his eyes, and speak in this manner to himself: Let us see whether I have passed this day without sin, without envy, without contention, without detraction; let us see whether I have done any thing for my own particular good, or the edification of others; let us see whether I have this day told a lie, whether I have sworn, whether I have suffered myself to be overcome with anger, or any other irregular passion, without having thought of doing any good, or delivering myself by good works from eternal torments. Who can bring me back again this day, which I have unprofitably spent, or in which I have employed myself only in vain and dangerous thoughts? After this sort, concludes this holy father, you ought to repent, accuse, and condemn yourselves, before Almighty God, in the retreat of your closets and of your hearts."

But it is not sufficient to make barely this review of your consciences; to the end it may be more beneficial, you shall add to it some penance, which you shall impose on yourself for these sorts of sins. This voluntary chastisement will render you more cautious, and more fearful to commit what you ought not to let pass without punishment, both for these sins of the tongue, and other defects you might fall into. Moreover, since there is no sin but deserves its punishment, the soul which is chastised becomes more careful not to fall into sin.

It will be also advantageous to propose to one's self every week the attacking some particular vice, and endeavoring to get the victory over it; the flesh is with difficulty brought to enter into this combat, but for fear it should fall asleep in so commendable an undertaking, it will do well to make it wear something which may awaken it, and cause it to remember its resolution. An hair girdle, a little chain set with points, or some other thing of this nature known to penitents, though but little painful, often produces wonderful effects. In the meantime, though you often fall, yet be not dismayed; but, on the contrary, though you should fall a thousand times a day into such like offences, get as often up again; put not your confidence in yourself, but in the superabundance of God's mercy; and be not troubled to observe that you have not yet wholly conquered any one of your passions, because this is a work which requires patience, and you will sometimes overcome in a little time what you have with difficulty been struggling against for many years. This ought to make you judge how important this victory is to you; and God also sometimes permits some Jebusites, that is, some passion or difficult temptation, to abide in the soul, as he left the remains of that nation in the midst of his people: this he does to exercise your virtue, and keep you in humility, which is the foundation of all other virtues. Take care also at your arising in the morning to face at first that enemy, that is that inclination or sin which most ordinarily makes war upon you;

arm yourself against it with the assistance of prayer, and a strong resolution never to have peace with it, and draw up all your forces where you see the greatest danger.

SECTION V.

THE fifth is, to avoid, as much as possible, venial sins; because they serve as a disposition to mortal ones. Persons who are apprehensive of death, forget nothing they think requisite for the preservation of their health, and preventing such diseases as may bring them to the grave; so all those that desire to be exempt from mortal sins, which are the death of the soul, must take care to shun venial ones; for they are real diseases, and, if neglected, become capable to bring her to death. For my part, I hold it as a certain truth, that a just man, who has long lived well, and persevered in grace, will never fall into any mortal sin, unless he is negligent in having a due regard to himself, and makes little account of venial sins, which weaken his soul, and deserve that God should withdraw his hand, that is, his assistance, by which he will be more liable to temptation, and more easily overcome. For as no man immediately ascends to the highest degree of perfection, so likewise no man falls on a sudden into the extremity of disorder, both good and evil growing in us by little and little. Wherefore it is observed of Job, that poverty attacked him before he was assaulted by the enemy; to show us that souls rarely yield to mortal sin till

after they are become poor, and have lost their vigor by the multitude of their negligences. Our Lord himself hath declared in the Gospel, that if you are faithful in a little, you will be also faithful in much; and if you use diligence in avoiding small evils, you will be secure against great ones. In the meantime, you shall observe, that by venial sins we understand idle words, immoderate laughter, eating, drinking, and sleeping beyond necessity, and other like things: though these are light faults, and such as at first do us no great hurt, yet do they, however, deprive us of great benefits, chilling devotion, and slackening that fervor of charity, which makes pure souls behave themselves cheerful and diligent in whatsoever concerns God's service.

SECTION VI.

THE sixth is, to embrace a manner of life somewhat austere, not giving to your flesh all it may desire, either in eating, drinking, sleeping, clothing, or anything else that flatters it. It is your greatest enemy; it is a spring of passions and irregular desires, which dries not; and the more it is checked and weakened, the more feeble and languishing will the passions be which it produces. A hungry and barren land yields only low and dry plants, affording but little juice; and, on the contrary, that which is fat and fruitful brings forth strong and vigorous trees, especially if, besides its natural fertility, care is taken to water it. The same difference is between the passions in bodies,

which ease and good cheer keep full and lusty, and in those that are weakened and brought low by fasting and other mortifications. Go, then, to the cause of your disorders, if you will take away the effects.

I have already told you, that virtue has no enemy more obstinate and dangerous than this our sinful flesh; it is she that, with the violence of her desires, opposes all our good designs; it is she that, through the passion she has to be always tenderly treated, disturbs all our holy exercises. Prayer, reading, silence, fasting, and watching, are to her intolerable constraints: look on her then, as the most powerful obstacle of your salvation, and set yourself to resist her; for if, through a cowardly complaisance, you once accustom her to become your mistress, you must no longer speak of the practice of virtue, or exercises of piety; but if, on the contrary, you courageously and continually oppose the first assaults she shall make upon you, and omit not, for some time, to fight against her vicious inclinations, after you shall have gained this advantage, and by exercise contracted a constant habit of mastering her, and contemning her efforts, all will be easy to you; for virtue has of itself nothing that is difficult, it being only the corruption of our flesh which makes her appear harsh. The most effectual remedy, and true assault against her corruption, is abstinence, which purifies her, dries her, and makes her obedient to the spirit. For, according to the opinion of a celebrated doctor, "Abstinence humbles the flesh, exalts the spirit, and tames

the passions; it satisfies for sins, and, which is both more admirable and more profitable, by destroying covetousness, cuts off the root of all evils, since those that are contented with little have no cause to desire superfluities." This virtue of abstinence will not only deliver you from all other evils, but also from all the vexations of spirit, from all the cares and anxieties with which they are turmoiled, who will not have anything wanting to the splendor of their expenses and the delights of their bodies; and thus you will continue free and at liberty to give yourselves wholly to God. It was for this reason those ancient fathers of Egypt exercised on themselves such severe mortifications: this was also the motive to that extreme poverty, of which St. Francis and his followers made so particular a profession; for, in effect, the austerity of the one, and the poverty and barrenness of the other, tend both to the same end.

If then, brethren, you desire to be true followers of our Lord, give no intermission to your tears, till you are arrived at that point of virtue to treat your body as an enemy, as a tyrant, as a treacherous slave; let it, as the common proverb is, be ill fed and well beaten, or, at least, deal with it as you see wise and discreet fathers do with their children; you see they bring them up in such a manner that they will not indulge them in their humors, nor countenance their follies. Nor do they therefore love them the less, but in this do violence to their own nature; observ-

ing this conduct only because the condition or good of these dear children require it. A true servant of God ought in this manner to treat his body, till he has attained his point; let him never believe he has done any great matter, or made any considerable advancement in the way of virtue. O how happy are those who have, in fine, gotten to it; who have reduced their body to suffer this treatment; who have thus humbled it and brought it down; who have deprived it of sleep and food; who have forced it to submit to the spirit, and in this manner gloriously conquered nature herself! Those that have obtained this happiness live no longer according to flesh and blood, but according to the spirit of Jesus Christ; they fight no longer under the standard or laws of corrupt nature, since they have made themselves her masters; and it may in some sort be said of them, that they are no longer mere men, since they are become something more than men. And thence you may know the horrible corruption and blindness of this world, which, through a spirit opposite to that of Jesus Christ, and to the perfection which Christianity requires, employs all its cares, and all its forces, only to content the body and make it live in delights.

SECTION VII.

A SEVENTH remedy is, to watch over your tongue. It is, indeed, one of the least parts of your body; yet by it you fall a thousand times a day; by it, you suf-

fer yourselves every hour to slip into filthy discourses; by it you utter speeches that are full of wrath, pride, and vanity; by it you fear not to assert lies; and by it oaths, curses, detractions, flatteries, and so many other evils, issue forth of your mouth: not without cause, therefore did the wise man say, that "in the multitude of words there shall not want sin;" (*Prov.* x. 19.) and that "death and life are in the power of the tongue." *Ibid.* xviii. 21. Wherefore I can give you no better counsel than to advise you, whenever you shall have occasion to speak to such persons, or of such matters, as you shall judge may lead to the danger of falling into ill language, lying, boasting, or vain glory, that you lift up your eyes on high, and recommending yourself to God with all your heart, say to him, with the prophet, "Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth, and a door round about my lips." *Psalms.* cxl. 3. Remember also, when you enter into any discourse, seriously to weigh all your words, and to imitate the vigilance and care of a traveller, who is obliged to pass a brook on the top of certain slippery stones laid across it. But since this matter is important, and requires a long discourse, we shall treat more largely of it hereafter.

SECTION VIII.

THE eighth is, that you permit not your heart to adhere with too much affection to worldly things; as honors, riches, children, parents, friends and the like. When this love is irregular, it is the most ordinary

source of all the sins, all the cares, all the vexations, all the temptations, all the extravagances, and all the troubles which happen in the world. As one of the fowler's principal arts is to take notice what sort of food is most pleasing to the birds he desires to catch, so it is the principal study of our adversaries to observe carefully the things to which our inclinations carry us with greater vehemence. These they make use of to draw us into their nets, knowing, as a poet says, that every one lets himself be drawn away by the passion that most pleases him. It is true, men are endowed with reason to govern them; but yet, generally speaking, the greatest part of men, if not all, follow their passions: it is for this reason they are called the feet of the soul, because they carry her whither they will. And St. Augustin, in the same sense, says, that "love is the poison of the soul, making her go whithersoever she draws her." *Conf. l. 13. c. 9.* If the love looks up to heaven, the soul suddenly aspires thither; and if the love inclines to earthly things, the soul is bowed down to the earth; in fine, what the weights are to a clock, the affections are to our soul; it moves as it is moved by them: and as for the keeping a clock in due order, its weights must be so exactly proportioned, that they be neither lighter nor heavier than the space between the hours it is to strike requires. So if you desire that your life should be well managed, endeavor to reduce your affections to their lawful use and order, esteeming things as they truly are, and loving them as much as

they are worthy of it. If you can attain to this degree, you will be at the highest point to which your virtues can ascend, since it is manifest, that the most part of them are employed only in balancing and moderating our desires according to this sort of proportion.

To enter more securely into this condition, be attentive never to let your heart expand itself excessively towards visible and transitory things; if you find it begin to run after them, bring it back immediately to its duty, and keep yourselves from loving them more than they deserve; that is, consider them as perishable and uncertain goods, of little continuance and importance. Withdraw your heart speedily from them, and at the same time lift it up to God, who is your only and sovereign good. If you in this manner love temporal things, you will never despair when you want them; if they are taken from you, you will suffer it patiently; and this is the only means to avoid abundance of sins, which people daily commit to obtain, increase, and keep them. Herein does the point of this important affair consist, for having seriously renounced this love, you will have little more to fear from the snares the enemy lays for you; as, on the contrary, if you have not yet made this renunciation, know that you have not yet begun to render yourselves followers of Jesus Christ. This is what he himself very profoundly teaches in St. Luke, when, speaking of you under the shadow of a parable he says, "Which of you, having a mind to build a

tower, doth not first sit down and reckon the charges that are necessary, whether he have wherewithal to finish it? lest, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that see it begin to mock him, saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish. Or what king going to make war against another king, doth not first sit down and think whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand; or else, whilst the other is yet far off, he sendeth ambassadors, and desireth conditions of peace? So, likewise, every one of you that doth not renounce all that he possesseth, cannot be my disciple." *Luke xiv. 28, &c.* This comparison will perhaps appear to you a little obscure, for it seems at first, that there is not a great resemblance between the heaping up of riches, or levying of armies, and the renouncing what one has, since the one tends to gather and the other to disperse. But if you maturely consider it, you will find that there is nothing more suitable. And this heavenly Doctor, from whose mouth it issued, well knew that poverty and the forsaking of all earthly things conduce as much towards the getting the better in spiritual combats, as a numerous army does towards the gaining the victory in battle, and a great stock of money to the completing of a building. For as a prince has so much more reason to think his dominions secure, as he has a more powerful army on foot to defend them, so the poorer, and the more in want a man is of this world's goods, the less does the

devil find whereby to assault him. It was for this cause that St. Francis, and so many other saints, would live so poor, to the end, that possessing nothing on earth, the world might have nothing to do with them, nor they with the world. But, on the contrary, if the devil sees that you abandon your heart to temporal things, and pursue them with too much vehemence, it is there he lays his nets and his snares, and it is of them he makes himself arms to destroy you. If you love honors, wealth, pleasures, or other things of that nature, he fails not to set before you a thousand means for the obtaining what you desire, for the keeping and increasing it: some of them may be lawful, others unlawful; and the devil, making use of the passion which blinds you, causes you to find nothing ill, or contrary to God's laws, in whatsoever may content your desires. Thus you are no longer guided by reason or justice, but by the fury of your passions: this inconvenience is not alone; see here another more dangerous. There are often many persons that aim at the same mark: now if in the end you design, or in the means you propose for the attaining it, you meet with any one that stays you, or gives you the least hindrance, there immediately springs up wrath, envy, hatred, law-suits, injuries, fighting, and, in fine, all sorts of violent motions that may put your minds in vexation and disorder: the first violently stirs up the concupiscible part of your soul, with all the different affections that accompany it, and the second heats the iracible, with

all the transports and furies which attend it ; and so many storms and tempests as arise in your soul, expose it to a thousand sorts of dangers and shipwrecks. It was this made St. Paul say, "The desire of money is the root of all evils." 1 *Tim.* vi. 10. Nor is it only that of money which is so, but also every other sort of irregular and excessive desire, there being none which produces not abundance of evils.

This is signified to us by another parable of the Gospel, which treats of the marriage of the king's son : some excused themselves from coming to it, because they were newly married ; others, because they had a purchase to make ; and others, on divers pretences of business or employments ; representing to us, by these examples, the disorderly love of earthly things, which so carries away our heart, as to make it condemn all the delights and all the treasures of heaven ; and you thereby see how true Jesus Christ's word is, that he who renounces not the love of the world, cannot be his 'disciple. Love then all things with moderation. "If riches abound with you," says the prophet, "set not your heart upon them." *Psalms* lxi. 11. Put all your hope in God, and expect from him, as from a true Father, assistance in all your affairs.

Be contented with what he shall have given you, continue peaceably in the state he has placed you in, and desire not to be more than he will have you be. Those that depart from this rule are deceived, and if they leave it to follow their irregular desires, they

must know, that they shall very hardly obtain what they seek with so much passion; that if they find it, it shall not profit them; and, to complete their happiness, they shall fall into many sins, which will make them lose both the benefits of this life and those of eternity. Wherefore Solomon very wisely said — “Lift not up thine eyes to riches which thou canst not obtain; for they will make themselves wings, as ~~of~~ an eagle, and fly to heaven.”

SECTION IX.

THE ninth is, to apply one's-self to the reading of good books, and reject bad ones, the reading of them being very pernicious; for the word of God is truly our light, our medicine, our nourishment, and our guide; it is that which fills our will with good desires; it is that which helps us to recollect ourselves when our heart is most distracted, and awakens devotion in us when it is most drowsy; it is by that we avoid idleness, which is the mother of all vices; and, in fine, as material nourishment is necessary to preserve the life of the body, the reading of good books, or hearing good instructions, is no less so to maintain the life of the soul. St. Jerome says, that the true food of the soul is to meditate day and night on the life of our Lord; and the reason he gives for it is, that by this exercise the understanding is fed with the knowledge of the truth, and the will strengthened by the savor it finds in it, and the love it conceives for it. These two being the principal wheels of the

clock, on which all, in a manner, depends; if they go right, all the rest keep equal time and justness in their motions. This is one of the most important effects wrought by the reading of pious books; but, besides this there is nothing more useful to show us our defects, to heal our scruples, and to comfort us in the temptations that come upon us. It is a treasure of wise counsels for our conduct, it discovers to us the sublime mysteries, and, in fine, encourages us to do well, by the examples of virtue it sets before us, and by the abundance of fruits which proceed from it. It is for this cause Solomon so much recommends it to us in his Proverbs, when he says, “My son, keep the commandments of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother. Bind them in thy heart continually, and put them about thy neck. When thou walkest, let them go with thee; when thou sleepest, let them keep thee; and when thou awakest, talk with them: because the commandment is a lamp, and the law a light, and reproofs of instruction are the way of life.” *Prov. vi, 20, &c.*

But that you may benefit by your reading, you must read well; enter not hastily and without respect into this exercise, which ought to be holy; banish from it all curiosity; read with humility, and with a purpose to become better. Reading, used in this manner, has much resemblance with meditation: meditation, indeed, stays a little longer on things, ruminating and digesting them more at leisure; but, in effect, good reading does almost the same thing,

and if you read with the same preparation as you ought, you will not draw much less profit from the one than from the other ; for the light which the understanding receives by it, descends immediately into the will and all the other powers of the soul, as the motion and virtue of the first heaven is communicated to all the celestial orbs. Love then the reading of pious books, but prefer prayer before reading ; read not many things at a time, for fear of tiring your spirit instead of refreshing it. Receive the word of God with a holy and spiritual hunger, even though it be rudely and grossly pronounced ; and if it affect you not, humble yourselves, accuse rather your own palate, which is too nice, than the rudeness of him who speaks ; and be persuaded that it is through your own fault that you are not found worthy to understand it, and receive it with pleasure.

SECTION X.

THE tenth is, never to lose God's presence ; that is, to behold him always present before your eyes, as the witness of your actions, the judge of your life, and your strength in your weakness ; and to desire of him often, by fervent aspirations, in consideration of these divine qualities, the assistance of his grace, to the end you may never take too much liberty in anything. In this manner did a holy king walk before God, as he teaches us by these words : " Mine eyes are always fixed upon our Lord, because he will deliver my feet out of the snare ;" (*Psalms* xxv 15.)

and in another place, "I set my Lord always in my sight; for he is at my right hand, that I be not moved." *Ibid.* xv. 8. It is true, that this continual attention ought not to regard God only; it is fit that you employ a part of it on yourselves and on the conduct of your life. In this manner ought you to make good use of your two eyes; the one to be often turned towards God, to give him the reverence you owe him, and beg of him his grace; and the other to consider your own actions, to the end you may never swerve from your obedience to his law. Remember, and be assured, that of all the exercises of devotion, this attention and vigilance towards God and yourselves, is one of the most certain to keep you to your duty, and make you pass this life like Christians.

I know that this is to require much of you, and that it is not easy to be always in this actual attention; but I am obliged to tell you, that you ought earnestly to desire it of God, and endeavor with all your might to procure it on certain occasions; as when you begin any dangerous affair; or such wherein you may be in hazard of offending; as when you leave retirement and silence to go and discourse about business with persons whom you know to be of a difficult temper; when you go to take your food; and especially when you resort to the choir to sing praises to God, or to the altar, to offer up there the holy sacrifice. It is of exceeding great importance to prepare yourselves well on these occasions, and to foresee with care the dangers you may fall into, if you behave

yourself negligently in them. Imitate the attention of a traveller, who meets with a difficult passage in his way; he has then his eyes more open than before, he observes all his paces and all his steps. Do you the like, and be watchful, attentive, and strengthened with a more powerful and more lively prayer on these occasions. Experience shows us that you should be more sober at table, and more moderate at your meals if, you are beforehand prepared against the allurements of intemperance, than if you had not used this precaution. It is the same with all the other vices, and by following this counsel you will avoid abundance of sins. Ecclesiasticus teaches us this wise lesson when he says, "Before sickness take a medicine;" (*Eccles.* xviii. 20.) that is, foresee the danger, and remedy it before it befalls thee.

SECTION XI.

THE eleventh remedy is, to fly idleness, which is the mother of all vices. And this is so true, that of four unhappy causes, related by the prophet Ezekiel, through which Sodom fell into the greatest and most horrible of all crimes, he alleges this as one of the principal. It was also a maxim with the ancient fathers of the desert, that a religious man employed, has but one only temptation to fear; but that he who is idle has reason to apprehend very many, because the devil endeavors to make them all enter into him through the gate of idleness. There are then two things found in this vice, which ought to render it

infinitely odious to all good people; the one, that it opens the door to all sorts of evils; and the other, that it shuts it to all manner of goodness. For since neither learning, riches, honor, virtue, nor any other good thing can be obtained without labor, a man that shuns pains throws away, as I may say, the instrument with which he may make himself master of all these good things. Who will not then abhor a fault which draws after it such dangerous consequences? What greater unhappiness can befall a town, than to have two gates, of which the one is for the bringing in all good things, and the other serves as a passage for all evil things, and to have the first always shut, and the second always open? I see nothing that more lively represents the state of the damned in hell. In the meantime, the soul of a sluggard, who is busied about nothing, is in this condition; it remains miserably exposed to all evil, and totally deprived of all good, since good comes only by labor, and a slothful man flies nothing so much as labor.

Wherefore, brethren, in such manner regulate your lives, and so well dispose of your time during the day, that there may be no moment unemployed. Let poor people, and such as are to earn their bread by labor, apply themselves to their trades, and the work of their hands; but as for those whom God has not caused to be born in that condition, I know nothing that can be better and more beneficial to them, than to employ in the reading of good books the time they shall have left after they have given

what was necessary to prayer, and the government of their household. Cassian, speaking of the ancient monks, says, that those fathers held the avoiding of idleness to be so important to the persevering in virtue and religious observances, that if any amongst them was so far separated from all worldly commerce that he could not carry his work to be sold, they obliged him notwithstanding, to labor; but at the year's end he set his work on fire to rid his cell, and began again anew. *Lib. x. c. 24.* He adds, that this labor no way hindered their prayer, because at the same time that their hands were exercised in action, their hearts discoursed with God by prayer.

SECTION XII.

WE put in the twelfth place solitude, which is the surest guardian of innocence. Nothing so powerfully preserves it; and it is this which all at once cuts off the occasion of all sins, since it banishes from our eyes and our senses all the objects which may give them birth. This remedy is so certain, that heaven sent no other to the blessed Arsenius, when he heard that voice which said to him, "Arsenius, fly, keep silence, and be quiet" If you will then become true servants of God, endeavor to retire into yourselves; do all that possibly you can to free yourselves from all visits, compliments, and worldly conversations. For what can you hear in companies, but detractions, lies, or flatteries? Or, if they are exempt from these things that are sins, which rarely

happens, they are not from abundance of others, less criminal indeed, yet such as will render your souls void of devotion, and so fill them with the images and remembrance of what you shall have seen and heard, which will never fail to present itself before you at the time of prayer, and hinder it from being so free and pure as it ought to be. But if you are looked on as uncourteous, and if worldly men take it ill that you pay them not these civilities, trouble not yourselves about it, for it is far less inconvenient that men should complain of you, than that you should displease God. Cast your eyes on the martyrs, and so many other saints who have done so great, and suffered so terrible things to obtain heaven. You labor for the glory they enjoy, and little pains or privations will seem light to you, if you compare them with a high recompense. After all, I invite you to a labor which is but small, and should you keep any other conduct, the greatness of the evils you would receive by it is so formidable, that I cannot sufficiently express it; for the corruption of the world is at this day so great, and the discourses of men so pernicious, that you can scarce frequent them without extreme danger.

SECTION XIII.

IN fine, for the last and most infallible of all remedies, you must absolutely break with the world; for it is impossible to be jointly the friend of God and of the world, to please God and the world to-

gether; the ways, the intention, the works of the one, are wholly opposite to those of the other: "For the bed is straitened, so that one must fall out, and a short covering cannot cover both," (*Isai.* xxviii. 20.) that is, God and the world.

A servant of God must then resolve with himself to renounce the world, and separate himself from it for ever, without troubling himself about what may be said to him. Provided you have not actually given any cause of scandal, laugh at the world with all its vain discourses and reproaches; all the noise it can make is but wind; its terrors, and all the occasions it can take to make you fear, are but bugbears to scare little children, who are afraid of every shadow. And to conclude, whoever shall regard the talk of the world, and concern himself about it, can never be God's true servant. This is what the great apostle said: "If I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ." *Gal.* i. 10. For every one is servant to him whom he desires to please, and whose will he obeys.

SECTION XIV.

BESIDES these counsels and general remedies I had to give you for strengthening you against the temptations and assaults of sin, there are yet three others, which are the most efficacious of all; to wit, the use of the sacraments, prayer, and alms. The apostle teaches us, that among all the means to prevent our falling into sin, there is none so powerful as grace,

and it is by these three sorts of good works that you may more easily obtain grace, though it be in different manners; for the sacraments ordinarily give grace, prayer begets it, and alms merit it. Other good works may also render you worthy of it, but the merit is particularly attributed to alms, because this great favor, to be found worthy of mercy in the sight of God, is a recompense which answers the charity you show to your neighbor. And thus alms not only serve to satisfy for past sins, but also to keep us from committing new ones, according to that sentence of Ecclesiasticus, "Alms shall obtain help for thee against all evil. Better than the shield of the mighty, and better than the spear; it shall fight for thee against thy enemy." *Eccles. xxix. 15, 16, 17.*

As for the sacraments, who is ignorant that God has instituted them as heavenly medicines against sins? that he left them in his church to serve as a remedy against the sluggishness of the faithful; to kindle charity, and stir up devotion in their hearts; to relieve their miseries, and be, as it were, treasures of grace. I should have much to say on this subject, if I would extend my discourse on every one of these three things in particular; but because I have already treated of the sacraments of penance and of the holy eucharist, in the second and third book of this Memorial, and shall speak of prayer in the fifth; having also said somewhat of alms, when I explained to you the three parts of satisfaction, of which alms is one; I shall insist no longer on them,

leaving you to the perusal of those places to which I refer you. But remember, that the most important of all things for the furthering of you in this way, and what you ought most incessantly to beg of God in your prayers, is, that he will rather abandon you to all other miseries, and do with you whatsoever in the rigor of his justice he wills, than permit you to fall into one mortal sin. To strengthen you in this resolution, beg earnestly of him three sorts of love, and three sorts of hatred: the love of himself, the love of sufferings, and the love of virtue; the hatred of sin, the hatred of your own will, and the hatred of your own flesh; these two last being the most usual causes of sin when they are inordinately loved. Let this holy hatred continually opugn and destroy this wicked and inordinate love, and let your actions, the contempt and severe treating of yourselves, always accompany your prayers; for in this consist the knot of so important an affair. But we shall handle this matter more at large in the end of this book.

SECTION XV.

IN these seventeen general remedies against sin does the greatest part of the Christian philosophy consist. It teaches also many particulars against every one of the vices taken separately; but the brevity I have prescribed to myself in this treatise suffers me not to treat of them. But, to conclude, and finish a last advice, with which it will be easy

for you to keep all the rest, have always four things before your eyes, and endeavor with great care to observe them; chastise your body, watch over your tongue, mortify your desires, and do all you can never to lose the presence of God. Thus shall you keep in order the four principal parts of which your body is composed, the flesh, the tongue, the understanding, and the will. These being regulated, the rest of your interior will remain calm, and then you will not easily fall into such offences as may put you out of God's favor, which is the principal end I have proposed myself in this treatise.

CHAPTER II.

Of the Temptations that most ordinarily befall those who begin to serve God, principally in Monasteries.

WE are advised in Ecclesiasticus to have the medicine ready before the disease attacks us: and the principal design in true philosophy has ever been, to discover unto men the dangers to which they are exposed in the course of this life, and to give them directions for avoiding them. According to this rule I thought it would not be inconvenient, before I finish this matter, to observe to you in a few words some sorts of temptations, to which they who begin to serve God are subject. It is not a small matter to know that they are but temptations, for to know

them well is in a manner to have conquered them. When the skilful fowler lays a snare for the catching any prey, he so disposes it that the poor bird may rather take it for some pleasing food, than for a snare; so, when the devil will tempt any one, he uses all his endeavors to persuade him that it is not a temptation, but some reasonable motion; and, therefore, it was that I said to you, it is no small advantage towards the vanquishing a temptation, to know that it is a temptation. In the meantime, brethren, whoever you are, if you pretend to enter into this new warfare, prepare for the fight. Suppose at first, that you shall find in it many difficulties, and that the temptations of the enemy will not be wanting. The wise man gives you warning of it in Ecclesiasticus, nor is it without cause that he says, "My son, when thou shalt come to serve the Lord, live in fear, and prepare thy soul for trial."

The first of these temptations, and that which first perplexes the minds of beginners, is ordinarily against the faith. The most part of men are so strangely asleep in matters of faith, that they scarce behold any of them but like things appearing in a dream; so that at the moment of their awaking out of this deep sleep, when they open their eyes, and discover such admirable mysteries, they are like strangers new come ashore in an unknown country; they scarce believe what they see, and their little knowledge and light make them hesitate on everything that is proposed to them. They may also be compared to a

new apprentice, who, entering into the shop of a master, that is full of works, finds it filled with all the instruments of his trade; he looks on them one after another with amazement; he asks what use they are for; but when he takes them into his hand, and learns how they are to be managed, then these doubts vanish, and he finds nothing more commodious or better invented, than that which troubled him and seemed strange to him in the beginning.

The second temptation is that which is termed blasphemy. This represents to the imagination filthy and abominable objects when a man endeavors to enter into the meditation of heavenly things. This most disturbs such persons, as have but newly quitted a worldly life, for their minds being yet filled with the images of what is most ordinarily seen in the world, it is difficult so soon to get that away, which time has deeply rooted in them. Thus representations altogether carnal and impure, are mixed with the spiritual ones they would behold, and this mixture gives them an extreme torment. The best way to get rid of them is to slight them, since they are in effect rather shadows, raised by the enemy to frighten, than real dangers.

The third temptation proceeds from scruples; and this caused only by the ignorance of spiritual things, which is usually found in novices. In this obscurity they go like those who walk in the night, fearing to fall at every step; and this particularly befalls them, because they know not the difference between a sin-

ple thought and a consent. Thus they believe they consent to every thing that comes into their mind.

The fourth temptation is, to be easily scandalized at seeing in another anything contrary to what they have proposed for themselves; for, beginning to open their eyes, and to know how happy a thing it is to serve God, they wonder any one should take another course, and cannot behold this disorder without indignation. These persons, brethren, do not yet understand the greatness of human frailty. They know not the depths of God's judgments, and are yet very far from the sentiments of St. Gregory, who teaches us, that true holiness is full of compassion, and that which is false or imperfect, easily falls into murmuring.

There is a fifth temptation, when men take offence at the laws and order established to regulate the state of which they make profession, and will set themselves up for judges and censurers, to decide whether what their rule has ordained, is good or bad. This is a very great rashness, into which none ordinarily fall but proud and presumptuous spirits, who trust more to their wit than to the wisdom of their superiors; and this temptation has an affinity with that of the old serpent, who questioned our first parents, saying, "Why hath God commanded you, that you should not eat of every tree of Paradise?" *Gen. iii. 1.* The wise man, on the contrary, exhorts us to hear the parables; (*Prov. i. 6.*) that is, the doctrine of the ancients, and the high sense they conceal in their ob-

securiety: they are not without mystery, though we at first perceive it not. A child who begins to read, believes what is told him without informing himself of anything; but, in fine, he understands things by time and exercise. If you desire to profit, suffer yourselves to be guided by the counsel of another, and utterly renounce your own opinion. Act rather by the way of faith and obedience, than by the way of reason, and say with the prophet, "I am become as a beast before thee." *Psalms* lxxii. 23. If you live not in this manner, you will not continue long in religion, nor will you ever possess peace in your heart.

There is another sort of temptation; which is, to be over eager in desiring spiritual comforts, to be excessively afflicted when they are wanting, to think yourselves something when God grants you these favors, and to believe yourselves so much the more perfect, the more consolations you receive. Understand, then, that these comforts and these favors are not always the most certain measure of perfection; but that first charity, and then the mortification of the passions, and the progress in solid virtues, are the marks and fruits of the true love of God. There are some also who are so mistaken, as to seek sensual comforts when they want spiritual ones, and this is a greater inconvenience than the first.

There is another temptation also befalls these persons of whom we speak; if God visits them by his grace, and shows them an extraordinary favor, they cannot keep it secret; they publish what they ought

to conceal; they will become preachers and directors of others before their time, and make themselves masters, being yet but scholars. They fall into this fault, thinking to do well, and under an appearance of virtue; but they ought to know, that the fruits of a tree are worth nothing if they are not produced in their season, and that the duty of a beginner is to put his finger on his mouth, and keep his soul.

Another temptation which molests them, and is very common, is the desire to change place. They imagine they shall be more quiet, more retired, more devout in certain places, and shall profit more in them; but they perceive not that by changing of place, the air is indeed changed, but not the heart; and that, whithersoever we go, we always carry ourselves with us; that is, we always carry along with us a heart corrupted by sin, which is an undrainable source of miseries and troubles, and whose sickness is not cured by the change of abode, but by mixing the severity of mortification with the odor of piety. This indeed truly changes the heart, and as long as this odor preserves its sweetness, the soul perceives not the stench which proceeds from the infection of our flesh. Wherefore the best way of flying from ourselves is by approaching to God, and communicating with him; for if we abide in him by a fervent devotion, and true sentiments of love, we are also out of ourselves, and remain separated from ourselves.

There is yet another temptation, when in a new gust, and through the new fervors they feel, they

give themselves with excess, and without discretion, to extraordinary watchings, prayers, solitude, and abstinences; not considering that they thereby spoil their sight, weaken their head, destroy their stomach, and often render themselves unfit for all spiritual exercises during the remainder of their lives. I know these things by experience, and the least evil which can happen by them, is to fall through these ill-undertaken austerities into some dangerous sickness. For it sometimes so falls out, either through the good treatment made to the sick, or for want of continuing the good exercises, which must of necessity be interrupted in this condition, that temptations in such sort increase, as to overthrow all virtue, which is no longer sustained by grace, nor by the strength of devotion: some being once accustomed to conveniences and ease, imagine they can be no more without them; and others, as St. Bonaventure says, come thereby passionately to love their own flesh, and to live not only in delicacy, but also in licentiousness; they make a color of their infirmities, and pretend thereby to have a right of giving a free career to their senses and pleasures.

There are also some, who, through overmuch precaution, fall into another extremity: they are so fearful of being sick, that they dare attempt nothing which may give them the least trouble. They say, it is sufficient for their salvation not to offend God mortally, without subjecting themselves to the rigors, or other practices of devotion and penance, which

are observed by all those who have embraced the strait and narrow way. This is a dangerous temptation, and of these sluggards does St. Bernard speak, when he says, "A beginner, who being as yet sensual, pretends to discretion, and being but a novice, thinks himself much advanced, and being but newly entered into the spiritual life, meddles in giving counsels, runs the hazard of continuing no long time in religion."

In fine, the last and most common of all temptations is, to leave the good way they have taken, and return into the world. The devil uses a thousand sorts of artifices to engage those in it afresh who have separated themselves from it. Sometimes, to flatter their incontinence, he represents to them marriage as an assured haven, and the sweetest and easiest of all sorts of life, though it is in truth most frequently nothing but a sea, always agitated with tempests; and to confirm them by great examples, he sets before them the ancient patriarchs, who were at the same time saints and married; sometimes he persuades them they shall meet with a woman entirely conformable to their humor and intention, and that so they shall bring up their children in the fear of God; and that increasing their estates by some rich alliance, they may therewith relieve the poor, which religious persons not being able to do, they thereby lose an excellent means of securing to themselves the kingdom of heaven at the day of judgment. Sometimes he deceives them under the pretence of a

higher perfection; he suggests to them the desire of a stricter order, as is that of the Carthusians; and they see not that he only lays this bait to get them out of the enclosure of their monastery, and to exercise on them his power with more liberty after they shall have broken through this restraint, and returned into the world. Sometimes he excites in their hearts a vehement love of solitude, making them desirous to imitate the retired lives of the ancient hermits; but this irregular desire which he insinuates to them, is only to destroy them by this desert and solitary way, after they are separated from the company of their spiritual fathers, and deprived of the assistance and light of their counsels.

For amongst all these sorts of temptations the most dangerous are those which allure us under the image of piety. Things that are openly evil carry a deformity with them which makes them known, and gives a horror of them at the very first; those on the contrary, which have some appearance of good, or some false character of virtue, are much more to be feared. Wherefore the devil more frequently makes use of them against God's servants; and knowing that they are resolved to do good and eschew evil, he employs all his malice and all his power to make them swallow this poison, that is, sin, mixed with the sweetness of a false zeal, or an indiscreet devotion. The enemies of Daniel having in vain attempted all sorts of means to bring him into disfavor with the king of Persia, for committing some

fault against the laws of his empire, and not being able to render him guilty on that side, took occasion from the observation of God's law to ruin him; which succeeded not with them, because God protected his servant. *Dan. vi.* The devil ordinarily tempts well-inclined persons in the same manner, and this way does he lay his snares for them; and for this reason ought they to walk with very great discretion and circumspection, even in the love of things which appear good and virtuous; for though it is not a sin to have an affection for good things, there will perhaps be one in the over-vehement manner of our desiring them. All heat that is violent ought to be suspected by you; and excess is always dangerous in all things.

These are the most ordinary temptations of such as begin to serve God. I set down some which can befall none but religious persons; others are common to them with those that live in the world; but they have all remedies fit both for the one and for the other. The principal are humility, submission, prayer, confession, and particularly the choice of a confessor, who has prudence joined with piety; for to him, as to a good pilot, does it belong to guide this vessel with judgment amidst the raging sea of this world, where the devils every moment raise such horrible tempests. But the most certain remedy of all, dear brethren, is to put your confidence in God, and invoke his assistance. It is he who knows our weakness, and supports us by his grace; it is he who,

at our coming forth of Egypt, draws us off from the land of the Philistines, that we may escape their assaults, and not be forced to undergo a cruel war, together with the fatigues of a long journey; and it is he, in fine, who, as the apostle speaks, "will not suffer you to be tempted above that which you are able;" (1 Cor. x. 13.) but will increase his graces, when he shall see us in the greatest dangers. And to conclude this point, the true remedies against temptations are the same that we have before declared to you against sin, for there can be no better arms against what inclines to sin, than those which must be employed against sin itself. And this shall suffice for the first rule or instruction to those who begin to serve God.

CHAPTER III.

The Second Rule of a Christian Life, which is the Imitation of Jesus Christ, for Persons more advanced in Virtue.

SINCE there are some persons who, not content with doing all they believe necessary for their salvation, desire to pass further, and perfect themselves in piety by the practice of the sublimest virtues, it is fit they should be assisted: the doctrine I am now going to teach them will be of use towards the accomplishing them in so noble a design.

And because all things have an end, to which they

ought to be directed; having in the former rule set down one end, which was the hatred and avoiding of mortal sin, we shall in this propose a more excellent one, which shall be the imitation of Jesus Christ, to which every Christian ought to direct his whole life. I shall be obliged to repeat to you here some things I have touched on in the foregoing chapters; but fear not, therefore, you will lose your time in perusing them, for I declared them to you at first, as means serving to avoid sin, which was then my principal aim; but here I shall represent them to you for other ends; wherefore I will treat of them in a particular manner.

SECTION I.

I SHALL then set before you, as the first of the precepts I am to give you, and as the end of the doctrine I desire to engrave in your hearts these words of our Saviour; "I have given you an example, that as I have done to you, so you do also." *John* xiii. 15. For as a good writing-master, desiring to render his scholars accomplished in his art, sets before them copies of the fairest and finest cut letter that can be found, to the end they may frame their hand to something like it; so I, who mean to give you the form of a holy and Christian life, have thought it necessary to go at first to the original, and represent to you Jesus Christ himself, since he was the Master of Virtues; and that all the things he said and did, during his life on Earth, were examples as well as remedies

for us. Every one knows, that effects are so much the more perfect, as they approach nearer to the perfection of their causes, and do more resemble them. As the perfection of a scholar consists in imitating his master, so all the perfection of the creature is to imitate its Creator, and render itself as like to him as it possibly can. Though this cannot be attained, it must be aspired after; and it is not without cause that our Lord, in so many places of holy scripture, invites us to so excellent an imitation: "Be holy," says he, in one place, "because I am holy;" (*Levit. xi. 44.*) and in another, "Be you merciful, as your Father is merciful;" (*Luke vi. 36.*) and elsewhere, "Be ye therefore perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect." *Matt. v. 48.*

Since, then, all the perfection of a creature consists in imitating its Creator; since to imitate a thing, it must first be seen; and since none can see God, during this life, in his nature and glory; the Son of God was so exceedingly gracious, that he vouchsafed to clothe himself with our flesh, to the end, that being made like other men, we might see Him whom we ought to imitate. He took the form of a servant, that we might see in what manner he conversed with men on earth, what were his words, to what works he applied himself, how he behaved himself in the good or evil success of such things as befell him, in solitude or in company, with his friends and with his enemies, with the great and with the small; and, in fine, that we might see the excellency of his virtues, his chari-

ty, his humility, his patience, his obedience, his meekness, his fastings, his prayers, his tears, his watchings, his preachings, his labors, his zeal for the salvation of souls, his love for his neighbor, his rigor and severity towards himself, his tenderness and condescension to others: this was one of the principal causes which made him come into the world; God was pleased to make himself man, that man might become like God; that he might learn to live as God, not only for having heard of God, but for having seen him; not only through the force of God's word, but through the efficacy of his examples. And this is what a great prophet had several ages before declared, when he said, Thy eyes shall see thy teacher, and thy ears shall hear the voice of one admonishing thee behind thy back, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, and go not aside neither to the right hand nor to the left." *Isa. xxx. 20, 21.* For by the manifestation of this great mystery, our ears have not only heard the doctrine of God, but our eyes have also seen his person; that is, they have seen the Word in flesh, God in man, to the end man might learn of him how he ought to be the imitator of God, and that man might not despair of being able to imitate God, since he saw that God had made himself man. Thus the greater conformity you shall have with Jesus Christ in all these virtues, the more perfect you will be. This is what the spirit of God, who resides in the just, enables us to effect. And, to use the words of a great doctor, "there is no painter who takes so much care to

make a picture perfectly resemble the original, as **Al** mighty God does to render all his elect like to **Jesus** Christ crucified ; knowing it to be the greatest perfection and the highest glory that can in this life be acquired."

But you will, perhaps, say to me : How can I imitate the Son of God ? I am man, and he is God ; I am an abyss of misery, and he is an abyss of virtue ; how can I raise myself to the imitation of so wonderful a purity ? Your doubt is reasonable ; and, indeed, a mortal and frail man cannot, of himself, attain to so high a resemblance ; but he may approach it by the power of God's spirit, when he is pleased to dwell in him. It is for the producing so admirable an effect, that this spirit was given to men ; it is by the virtue of this divine spirit that they may lead a divine life ; doing the works not of men, but of God, since they have the spirit of God. It would not be impossible for a man to speak like Cicero, if he had the same spirit with Cicero ; nor for another to dispute like Aristotle, if he had the spirit of Aristotle. Thus it is not impossible for a man to imitate the virtues of God, when he has received the spirit of God. It is no very new change to see things participate in the nature of those with which they are joined. Insipid food, seasoned with salt, will become savory ; preserved with sugar, sweet ; and dressed with perfumes and spices, odoriferous : it is in like manner less extraordinary for man to become divine, if he partakes of the divine spirit. Our Lord explained both the

one and the other in few words, when he said : " That which is born of the flesh is flesh ; and that which is born of the spirit is spirit." *John* iii. 6. By which he plainly declared to us, that it was not possible the flesh should, of itself, be anything but flesh ; but that it was not also impossible it should become spirit, if it were assisted by the virtue and presence of the divine spirit.

It is from the influence of this spirit, as from a heavenly seed, that the children of God are born ; and it is not, therefore, to be wondered, if, as children, they resemble their Father, and lead a divine life, since they have received the divine spirit, as one of the dearest among these children teaches us in the following words : " We, having the veil taken off from our face, and receiving in our souls, as in a glass, the brightness of God, are transformed into the same image of God, through the operation of his spirit." *2 Cor.* iii. 18. Nor are we to be much surprised, if they are in their degree styled gods, as David named them, when he said, " I have said that you are gods, and all of you the sons of the Most High ; (*Psalms* lxxxi. 6.) since it is not so much to be made partakers of God's name, as it is to be partakers of his spirit and likeness.

And, indeed, ought any one to be astonished at man's being raised to this dignity, since it is a grace bestowed on us by the Son of God, who came down from heaven to give it to us ? He vouchsafed so far to humble himself as to become man, to the end that

man, who was totally corrupted, might become divine, not by nature, but by grace. Thus he would, in one respect, be the exemplary cause of all our perfection, since he represented to us, in his own most holy life, the image of a perfect life; and in another, he would be the meritorious cause of it, since it was he who, by the mystery of his incarnation, and the sacrifice of the cross, obtained for us so sublime a state.

Receive, then, and preserve faithfully in your hearts, this first precept for the conduct of your life, and regard it as the end it ought to have. To this does the apostle, St. Peter, invite you, when he says, "Christ also suffered for us, leaving you an example that you should follow his steps. Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth. Who, when he was reviled, did not revile; when he suffered, he threatened not." 1 *Pet.* ii. 21, &c. St. John requires of you the same thing in these words: He that saith he abideth in him, ought himself also to walk even as he hath walked." 1 *John* ii. 6. And St. Prosper, explaining this passage, adds: "What is it to live as Jesus Christ lived? It is to condemn all that is pleasing in the world, as Jesus Christ condemneth it: it is to bear the harshest and most rigorous usage, which he voluntarily suffered; it is to teach what he taught; it is to expect what he promised; it is to do good even to the most ungrateful; it is not to render evil for evil to those that speak reproachfully of us; it is to pray for our enemies; it is to have compassion on the wicked; it is to gain

the good will of those that are against us ; it is to suffer the proud with patience ; and, in fine, as the apostle says, it is to die to the flesh, and to live to God alone."

The imitation of Jesus Christ comprehends all these things, and many others with them ; but because this precept is general, it is requisite I now treat of virtues in particular, and explain to you the use and practice of them, according to promise.

CHAPTER IV.

Of the Exercise and use of Virtues.

THE first of all the virtues, and which is like the tree of life planted in the midst of Paradise, is charity, which makes us love God above all things, with all our heart, and with all our strength. *Matt. xxii. 38.* This is the first and the greatest of all the commandments. Charity is the queen of all virtues, the beginning and end of the whole Christian life ; it is the life and soul of all our actions, without which neither faith, hope, the gift of prophecy, martyrdom itself, nor all the other virtues, do any thing avail us. *1 Cor. xiii.* For the obtaining this divine virtue you principally stand in need of three things : the first is, to keep your souls free from passions, and from all the sins they are wont to produce ; for the divine wisdom, as the holy scripture says, will not enter into an evil conscience, nor will she make her

abode in a heart subject to sin. *Wisd. i. 8.* Wherefore, all those who design to love Almighty God, continually endeavor to abstain not only from mortal sins, but from venial ones also, as much as possibly they can. For as a looking-glass receives the rays of the sun with so much the more brightness as it is itself more bright and clean, so a soul does so much the more participate in the splendors of divine love as itself is more pure and free from the stains of sin.

The second is, to shun vain conversations, to recollect yourselves as often as you can within yourselves, and seriously to revolve in your minds all such things as may stir up your hearts to love Almighty God; for by this exercise you will know that all the causes of love we meet with in all creatures are to be found in God alone, and all of them in the highest perfection. The philosophers say, that good is naturally amiable, and that every one loves his own good. Now, according to these maxims, these two things do (besides many others) principally oblige you sovereignly to love Almighty God; the excellency of his perfections, and the greatness of his benefits. We shall in another place treat more largely of these two obligations. Add to these two motives, the excessive love he has for you, and that which you owe to him; since he is your father, your brother, your king, your master, your God, and your last end. He is for this reason called the Bridegroom of your souls, and he for this cause deserves to be loved with an infinite love, forasmuch as the

love of the last end is of that nature. The farther you shall enter into the consideration of these things, and the more time you shall employ in them, the more amiable will this divine object appear to you. I cannot therefore, brethren, sufficiently conjure you to meditate on it, if you desire to make any great progress in this love.

The third, and most expeditious means, is, to beg it earnestly of Almighty God. If you find that your soul, touched with the sweetness of our Lord, sighs after this extreme beauty, instantly beseech his Majesty, that he will grant you this precious treasure, which he alone is able to give you. This way is often found the easiest and the shortest, and a fervent prayer frequently gains that in a moment, which a long course of considerations cannot obtain. It is good to meditate; it is better to pray. Ask, therefore, continually this precious jewel; beg it earnestly, and let the voice of your heart cry louder than that of your tongue. Choose in the scripture, or in the writings of the fathers, some words full of tenderness, to express the fervor of your desires. But we shall speak of this virtue, and all that concerns it, in the treatise of the love of God. Moreover, assure yourselves that not one of these words, nor one of your groans shall be unprofitable. Our Lord is gracious, and his liberality has no limits. In consideration of your prayer, if it be humble and sincere, he will grant you either some increase of devotion, or some new light, or some new flame of love; he

will augment his grace in you, he will draw your heart more effectually to him; he will comfort you with greater sweetness, or will strengthen you more in the good cause you have begun. Take heed then not to lose by your negligence so much good, which you may every moment acquire.

Above all, if you desire to make any progress in charity, keep your heart just. In all the works you shall do, purify first your intention; never seek in them your interest, your honor, or your content; but only the good pleasure and will of God. Be careful in all that you undertake, whether of yourself or by the orders of another, never to do any thing, either because decency requires it, or to satisfy the ceremonies of the world, or because necessity obliges you, or force constrains you to it, or to please the eyes of men, or for any other human interest; but purely to please God, and content him; as a virtuous wife serves her husband, not for the advantages she may expect from him, but through the sole affection she bears him. Your soul ought to be so chaste and faithful to this point, that, as this wife adorns and dresses herself only to satisfy her husband, and not to please the eyes of others, so you should desire the ornaments of virtues only to render yourselves acceptable in the sight of Almighty God. I speak not this, as if it were blameable to do good works for the obtaining eternal life, and to look on it as a recompense; such an intention being, on the contrary, holy and commendable; but I only give you to under-

stand, that your actions will always have so much the more perfection and merit, as you shall more separate them from all manner of interest, and more purely design them for the love of God. For, as St. Bernard admirably says, "Perfect love is neither made stronger by hope, nor becomes weaker when it expects nothing; for it acts not on considerations of the benefit it may receive, nor would it ever cease to act, though it should lose all hope of acknowledgment. It is love alone, and not interest, which moves it to labor."

But it is not enough, brethren, to have this holy intention in the beginning and end of your actions; you ought actually to preserve it in the very moment you are doing them. You ought in such manner to do them, as to offer them at the same time you do them, and in the very same instant to love God effectively, and by a formed act: when you work, show that you are more in prayer and love of God, than in the work. Thus shall you never be distracted in what you do, and you shall imitate the practice of the saints, who amidst apparent labors and distractions were never separated from God. The garments of the spouse, according to the words of the Cantic, smelt of incense. *Cant. iv. 11.* This is a figure in which the Holy Ghost would, by garments, signify the virtues souls are clothed with; and by incense, (which being cast into the fire, sends up an agreeable perfume even into the highest region of the air,) the force of prayer, which being made on earth, ceases

not to penetrate even the heavens. When a mother, through excess of goodness, washes the feet of her son, or a wife those of her husband, who is returned from a journey, both the one and the other love them and serve them at the same time, and the heart both of the one and the other is filled with joy in doing service to persons whom they so dearly love. This is the disposition your hearts ought to be in when you do anything for the service of your Creator; and thus your garments will send forth before his face an odor of sweetness.

What you shall thus do will be of great merit; for the value of our actions depends principally on the purity of the intention with which we do them. In money the bulk is not so much esteemed as the metal; a little gold is worth more than abundance of copper; so in good works, the number is not so considerable as the devotion and love which accompany them; as appears by the poor widow's mite, which our Lord more esteemed than the great offerings of several rich men. *Luke xxi. 3, 4.* It sometimes happens, that a good action is done with so good a will, and with so much charity and devotion, that it is greater in the sight of God than many others which are done in the same manner. As one only prayer made with simplicity and fervor is more acceptable to Almighty God than many others that are weak and cold; so one only action, done with zeal and devotion, obtains more than many others which want that fire. This is what they ought to observe. who

live in a state which obliges them to be always employed in good works: take heed, whoever you are, in what manner you do them; let not their number puff you up, but look whether you do them as you ought, that is, with great devotion and charity.

Since this divine virtue has two branches, the love of God and the love of our neighbor, endeavor as well to satisfy this second obligation as the first, and never cease to love your brethren for the love of God. Charity not only requires us to love God, but will also have us love what belongs to him. Now amongst the things that are his, nothing is more so than reasonable creatures, which he has made after his own image, and redeemed with his own blood; and therefore it comes, that from the same root and the same habit whence the love of God proceeds, springs also that noble instinct, which makes us love our neighbor for God's sake: this is the end for which we ought to love our neighbor, and this is also the great motive by which we are obliged to love him, how unworthy soever he may be of our love. We ought not to love him for himself, but for the sake of God, who is Sovereign Lord of all men and of all things, who has created us, redeemed us, and commanded us to love one another for his sake; for though we may possibly sometimes not find in our neighbor any cause to love him, yet there are innumerable in God, by which he deserves that we should for his sake not only love our neighbor, but even all the pains and torments in the world; so that if we see not any sub-

ject of love in the creature, we shall find in God an infinite number of reasons, both to love him, and to do much more for him.

As to the effects, this love requires, that we do injury to no man, that we speak ill of no man, that we judge rashly of no man, that we keep an extraordinary secrecy in what concerns our neighbor, and that we rather condemn our mouth to an eternal silence, than suffer it to utter the least word which may any way prejudice his reputation. Nor is it enough that we do ill to none, but we must, moreover, do good to all, assist every one, give good counsel to all such as stand in need of it, pardon those who have offended us, beg pardon of all those whom we have offended, and above all, patiently suffer the humors, defects, and even the injuries we receive of our brethren, according to the precept of the apostle, "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so you shall fulfil the law of Christ." *Gal.* vi. 2. This is what charity requires, in which consists the law and the prophets; for to go about the founding of a religion without it, is to think of framing a lively and active body without a soul, which is absolutely impossible.

SECTION I.

THOUGH hope was no more in Jesus Christ than faith, because Jesus Christ possessed what was infinitely greater; it is nevertheless a virtue you ought highly to cherish, as being the sister of charity. It is this which makes you regard God as your Father

and gives you for him the heart of a child ; for in effect, as there is no good on earth which, being compared to God, deserves the name of good ; so there is no father in this world, who has for his children such tenderness and charity, as this heavenly Father shows to those whom he has condescended to choose for his. Assure yourselves that all things, whether good or bad, prosperous or adverse, which befall you in this world, are for your good, since the least bird falls not into the net but by God's providence ; discover to him your troubles ; and grounding all your assurance on his liberality, which is immense ; on his promises, which are faithful ; on the benefits you have received of him, which are so many pledges of his bounty ; and particularly on the merits of his Son, which he has made ours ; hope firmly that he will have compassion on you, though you are sinners and miserable ; that he will powerfully assist you by ways which are unknown to you, and at the hour you least think of, and that he will turn all things to good for you. And to render yourselves worthy of his favors, have always in your mind, and often in your mouth, these words of David : " I am a beggar and poor ; the Lord is careful for me." *Psalms xxxix.* 18.

The whole scripture, the psalms, the prophets, and the gospels, speak of nothing so often as of this divine Providence, and how we ought to put all our hope in it. Exercise yourselves in this virtue, and you will see that your heart will find itself thereby

insensibly strengthened, not only to suffer, but also to expect your salvation from the afflictions and troubles it shall please God to send you. Be assured, that till you have obtained this confidence you shall never enjoy true peace and quiet of mind. Without it all things will afflict you, and cast you into vexation and trouble; but with it nothing ought to disquiet you, since you have God on your side, and his promises put you in assurance.

SECTION II.

HUMILITY, as well inward as outward, ought also to be placed in the rank of principal virtues, since it is the root and foundation of all the rest. This virtue was so dear to the Son of God, and was so conspicuous both in his person and whole life, that, designing to give us a perfect model for ours, he comprehends all in these words; "Learn of me, for I am meek and humble of heart;" (*Matt. xi. 22.*) which made Cardinal Cajetan say, that the principal part of the Christian philosophy consists in these two dispositions; for humility disposes our souls to receive the gifts of God, and meekness teaches us to converse charitably with men.

True humility causes a man to regard himself as one of the vilest and most abject creatures in the world, unworthy of the bread he eats, of the earth he tramples under his feet, and of the air he breathes; it makes him esteem himself no otherwise than an abominable carcass, full of worms, the stench where-

of, as he himself cannot endure it, renders him intolerable to every one else. In this manner speaks blessed Vincent Ferrier: "My dear brethren," says this saint, "we ought, both you and I, to have this opinion of ourselves, and I more than any one ought to have it, for my life is nothing but stench and filth, my works are abominable, and altogether polluted with the corruption of my sins: and what is more deplorable I daily feel that this corruption and this stench is renewed in me." *Tract. de Vita Spirituali*. This condition, which strikes a horror in the eyes of men, ought to cover you with an extreme confusion, since it appears more clearly to the eyes of God, whose sight is far more penetrating. Imagine that you are already brought to this last and terrible judgment, have a sincere sorrow for your sins, be sensibly afflicted for having lost the grace which you received when you were washed with the water of baptism. As you perceive that you are wholly putrefied and fetid in the sight of God, be also persuaded that you are no less so before angels and men; and thus continue in their presence full of confusion and contempt of yourselves. Think seriously on what this most excellent Majesty deserves; consider how highly you are indebted to him for so many favors as you have received from him; how ill you have answered both the one and the other; how, instead of the obedience you owe him, you have paid him only disobedience; and you will see that you have deserved all creatures should rise up against you, and unite all their forces

to destroy you, to the end they may revenge on you the injuries you have so insolently done to their Lord. For this reason, desire to be despised and to be scoffed by every one, the very dregs of mankind; receive patiently and with joy all the shame, infamy and injuries that may befall you; let them give you as much pleasure as a person animated with wrath receives when he is revenged on his enemy; since you ought to look on yourselves as such, and it is but just you should revenge on yourselves the offence you have committed against God.

Another condition of true humility is, that it ought to fill you with a greater distrust of yourselves, of your own wit, and of your own strength; that it ought to turn you wholly towards Jesus Christ, whom you must consider as poor, dishonored, contemned, and dead for you, by the torment of the cross; till it has, in fine, brought you to this point, that you do for his sake become, as it were, dead to all the pains and affronts which may fall on you. Nor is it sufficient to be in these sentiments, as to the preparation of the heart; the outward man, if it is well prepared, must be correspondent to the inward, and as you already, by thought and mind, put yourselves in the lowest place of the world, so you ought, in imitation of Jesus Christ, reduce yourselves to wash the feet of all men: your deportment, your apparel, your words, your table, the service of your house, and every thing else (keeping nevertheless, the laws of discretion) must be conformable to the humility you

have in your interior ; for it would not only be a new monster, to see a man divided and different from himself, but it would be also directly opposite to our Lord's command, who says, "Thou shalt not take a form contrary to thine own form." *Eccles. xiv. 26.* So that such dissimulation wounds your soul.

SECTION III.

CHASTITY, which, as our Saviour affirms, is properly the virtue of angels, has nothing to fear when it is accompanied with humility. I say that it has nothing to fear with this faithful companion ; because, one of these virtues failing, the other runs the danger of being lost : St. Anselm, therefore, spoke divinely when he said, that "If pride is not strong enough to ruin humility, impurity brings in aid to destroy it ; and if the filthy desires of the flesh are too weak to vanquish chastity, pride lends a hand to overthrow it ; so that these two virtues have these two vices to conquer, whereas other virtues have but one. Temperance, for example, is opposed to gluttony, and diligence is an enemy to sloth ; but humility and chastity have always both pride and impurity to struggle with together ; for though pride is a worm, which by little and little undermines and corrodes all virtue, it nevertheless particularly attacks this ; and, consequently, if you desire to be truly chaste, and securely to preserve your purity, love humility."

This virtue requires of you almost the mind of an angel ; it will have you fly all visits, conversations,

and friendships, that may be any way prejudicial to it; even sometimes those of spiritual persons; for, as St. Thomas excellently well says, spiritual love is often changed into carnal love, because of the resemblance there is between the one and the other. It requires that, as soon as an ill thought shall have entered into your heart, you reject it with as much speed as you would do a coal of fire that should have fallen on your hand; it requires that you employ all your endeavors to be so chaste and so faithful to God in this point, that you live as if you were without eyes, not to see any thing which may offend him who has given you them. And if you are obliged to behold any thing, then say mildly in your heart: O Lord, I renounce my eyes, if they dare see any thing which may displease thee; suffer me not to abuse these eyes which thou hast created, and which thou now illuminatest with thy light, that I may see and admire thy works, by making them weapons of offence against thee. Keeping this reservedness and this modesty in your looks, be assured that Almighty God will protect you, that you shall avoid many dangers, and live in great peace. It is also a part of chastity to gain this important point, that your heart be only God's, and that it be so tied and bound to him, that no creature can possess it. See that it be truly dead to the world, and, as if it were deaf and blind, let it neither desire to see or hear any thing but what is necessary or advantageous to your salvation. Nor is it enough to have the body and

heart chaste — your eyes, your words, your conversation, your clothes, your table, and all the rest of your life must breathe forth nothing but chastity ; for when this virtue is perfect, it makes all things chaste and innocent, and if any one thing should not be so, it would undoubtedly be capable to ruin all.

SECTION IV.

TEMPERANCE in eating and drinking is, of all the virtues, that which most upholds chastity ; for, as St. John Climacus says, to desire to be chaste, and at the same time to pamper one's body with delicacies, is to do like him, that should pretend to drive away a dog by offering him a piece of bread.

If you pretend, then, to any part in this virtue, you ought to be exceedingly careful not to overcharge your stomach either with wine or meat, for fear your spirit be oppressed by it. Use both the one and the other with moderation, and at your meals think much less on the pleasure than on the necessity. It is natural to find a relish in what one eats, but seek it not, neither stay in it with delight : dip spiritually with your mind in the bitter cup of your sufferings of our Redeemer every bit you shall put into your mouth ; and receive all that you shall drink, as from the living fountain of his sacred wounds : choose rather common and gross meats, than such as are dear and delicate, remembering that our Lord tasted gall and vinegar for you : but though you satisfy yourself only with common food, yet, if you eat it with too much

greediness, you lose all the reward of abstinence, which consists not so much in the quality of what is eaten, as in the manner of using it. St. Augustin teaches us, that it is not impossible for a wise man to preserve temperance amidst the daintiest dishes, and for an intemperate man to lose it at a repast, where there is nothing but herbs; since gluttony regards not the things that are eaten, but the disorder and excess with which they are taken. In fine, if you are true lovers of the spiritual life, you will declare a perpetual war against sensuality, refusing, with discretion, whatsoever it passionately desires. In which, nevertheless, you ought to take heed to chastise your flesh, that you ruin not your health by indiscreet abstinences. Trust not yourselves in this matter; keep in it, as in all things else, necessary moderation, and suffer yourselves to be guided by the counsels of the wise. This virtue extends yet farther, since it requires that you avoid superfluity in your apparel, in your equipage, in your houses, in your furniture, and in every thing else of which you are wont to make use.

SECTION V.

I EXHORT you also to love silence, which has a very strict connection with temperance; it is called the mother of innocence, the key of discretion, the faithful companion of chastity, the sure guard of devotion, and the ornament of youth. To exercise you profitably in it, never permit any word to proceed out of

your mouth which may either prejudice your neighbor's reputation, or be suspected of the least uncleanness. Never give ear to any that speak them; but on the contrary, employ all the prudence that God shall have given you to break off such discourses. Let your speech be always free from flattery, when you speak of others; and from vanity, when you speak of yourselves. Avoid being crabbed in your language; endeavoring, on the contrary, to give it all the sweetness and affability you can, without affectation. Particularly shun artifice, and let your discourses be simple and sincere, as those of Jesus Christ's true children ought to be. Never utter any idle words, because it would be to make an ill use of your time; but especially abstain from such as savor of raillery, because there is nothing that hinders devotion more. But the two most dangerous rocks you are obliged to fear, are the speaking well of yourselves, and ill of your neighbor. The better to secure yourselves from all those dangers, speak little; if you can be silent without prejudicing charity or obedience, willingly hold your peace; let not your silence, nevertheless, be burdensome, or of ill edification to any one; and when you shall be obliged to speak, be as brief as possible you can; speak with circumspection, and before you open your mouth, resolve within yourself to say nothing but what shall be absolutely necessary. Do not easily engage yourself to contradict the sentiments of another, nor be obstinate against any one; but after you have twice

or thrice asserted what you hold for truth, if you are not believed, leave others to think what they please, and continue silent, unless your silence be manifestly prejudicial to God's glory. Take heed of appearing too much wedded to your own opinions: meddle not with unpleasing disputes in your conversation; insist not over-earnestly and with too much heat, even on things you know; but say, simply and modestly, I think it is so, or, It is so, if I am not mistaken. Not to deceive yourselves in this matter, which is so ordinary and so important, and, as the grammarians say, not to commit any barbarism in this spiritual language, when you desire to speak, consider seven things, or seven circumstances. The first is, the matter of which you will speak: which ought to be of things good, profitable, or necessary, rejecting such as are evil, unprofitable, or dangerous. The second is, the end for which you shall speak; which ought to be free from dissimulation, interest, and vanity, but full of simplicity and freedom, having an honest and solid aim. The third is, the manner how you shall utter your words: speak without being over-much moved, without making too much noise, and also without affecting a certain negligence and delicacy, but after a fashion tempered with mildness and gravity; neither let your discourse be heavy and unpleasant, but agreeable and sweet, as they say St. Basil's talk was. Women particularly should take care to speak without affectation, and very simply, and their language ought to resemble water, which is said to be best

when it has no taste at all. It is also a great defect to desire to appear always eloquent, and to make studied discourses; this is a great vice in men, and a dangerous thing in woman. The fourth regards the person who speaks, for it is not lawful for young persons to speak with so much liberty. Silence is a great ornament to that age, and shows a reservedness and shamefacedness, which very much become it, especially in maidens, according to that wise remonstrance which St. Ambrose addresses to them: "Let virgins look to themselves, and their manner of speaking; for to speak many words, though they are good, is often a great fault in a maiden." The fifth is, to consider before whom one speaks: for respect must be had to wise and ancient men: neither must one speak in their presence, but when it is necessary, or that one cannot be excused from it. The sixth is, to consider the place in which one speaks; for there are some places where one may speak, and there are others where one must be silent, as in the church, or other places, where one is obliged to behave himself with respect. The seventh is, to examine the time; for, as the wise man says, "There is a time to keep silence, and a time to speak." *Eccles. iii. 7.* And herein is prudence as remarkable as any thing else whatever, especially when there is an intent of rebuking, exhorting, or counselling any one; for it is good in all things to take a fit and proper time, especially in those where, for want of considering this circumstance, one runs the hazard

of speaking unprofitably, and reaping no fruit from one's words. And this it is that made the wise man say, that "to speak a word in due time, is like apples of gold on beds of silver." *Prov. xxv. 11.*

You ought, therefore, exactly to weigh all these circumstances, if you design to keep your tongue innocent; for in what manner soever you transgress these rules, you offend; and since it is very difficult not to infringe some of them, when one speaks, the most secure way for avoiding these shelves and rocks is, to shelter yourselves in the haven; that is, to continue in silence.

SECTION VI.

HAVING thus regulated and mortified your tongue, there remains yet a more important step for you to make: you must proceed to the mortification of your own will, which is another key of good life, and there is nothing so available for the attaining to it, as the submitting yourselves to the laws of obedience. Highly esteem this virtue, and take pleasure to exercise yourselves in it; for you cannot offer to God a more agreeable sacrifice than the destruction of your own perverse and rebellious will. Whatever action you do through obedience, how mean and low soever it is, God will raise it, and recompense it, as if it were very excellent: and, on the contrary, God will never approve of any of your actions, how eminent soever it appears, if it be repugnant to the obedience you owe to him, or to your superiors. *Whoever,*

therefore, you are, obey, and that with a free and cheerful heart, those who are over you; honor them for the love of God; for though they are not, perhaps, worthy of respect, if you regard their person, yet they are because of their office: obey even your equals and your inferiors, in such things as prudence and decency will permit. Be very glad to be reprehended or taught by another, whoever he may be; and if you are too severely rebuked, let your defence be humble, if you think fit to make use of any; though it may be better for you on such occasions, in imitation of your Saviour, to suffer and be silent, unless your silence may cause scandal. “Be ye subject therefore to every human creature for God’s sake.” 1 *Peter* ii. 13. And when you shall receive from him extraordinary favors and consolations, take heed of being puffed up by them, or esteeming yourselves the better for this reason; for, indeed, whatsoever good you have comes from God, and whatsoever is faulty or sinful in you, is from yourselves.

SECTION VII

LEARN also to suffer, without murmuring and complaining, the injuries, contempts, calumnies, afflictions, and losses, which Almighty God shall permit you to undergo; believing, as it is undoubtedly true, that these evils befall you through his ever just and ever merciful providence; conceive no indignation or hatred against those by whom they are inflicted on you; but, on the contrary, according to your master’s

example, show yourselves gentle and courteous towards them.

Judge not of men, nor make estimation of them by their body, in which you see nothing but what is miserable; but by the dignity of their soul, created after the image of God. Never show a dislike to any one; be yet more careful never to appear angry, melancholy, or peevish; but, on the contrary, in your words, in your conversation, when you answer any one, keep always with the gravity which your profession requires, sweetness and affability. Bear gently with other men's faults; and as for such as offend God's honor, procure with all possible care, either by yourselves, or by others, that they may be corrected; but let this be always done with sweetness and charity, and when you shall know that it may be profitably done; hate sin in men, but hate not the men for the sin's sake; for men are God's work, and sin is the work of men. Be always ready to do good to all, even to those who wish you ill, and have as much compassion for those who do evil, as for those who suffer it: be particularly touched for the souls of the faithful which are tormented in purgatory, and pray with great affection for them. To render yourselves more sensible of other's miseries, put yourselves in the place of those who bear them, and then you will feel them as your own. Envy no man; speak ill of no man; have a good opinion of every one: and if there arise any sinister suspicions in your heart, reject them immediately, for fear they take root in it.

Despise no man ; never despair of a sinner's conversion ; for such a one as you see to-day a criminal, may to-morrow, by God's grace, be changed. Have a firm purpose never to judge any one, and always interpret the words or actions of another in the best part, seeing and hearing all things with a sincere and charitable heart.

Trouble not yourselves at the great calamities you see happen in the world ; but trust in God's providence, without which a bird falls not to the ground. Courageously recommend yourselves, and all things that concern you, to the divine Providence, relying with an entire confidence, in all your troubles, on the mercy of so good a Master ; address yourselves to him by fervent prayers, according to this counsel of the prophet : "Cast thy care upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee." *Psalm liv.* 23. And if it sometimes happens, that you feel not any inward consolation, and that your heart is thereby cast down, grow not, therefore, slack in your resolution, but redouble your prayers, making them with abundance of faith and humility in our Lord's presence, and not seeking after vain comforts to divert you, for he himself will comfort you. If the wicked spirit inspires into you evil thoughts, which are sometimes horrible and abominable, make no account of them, but speedily shut the eyes of thy soul against these base objects ; for you will more easily vanquish these assaults by slighting them, than by employing much labor and diligence to combat them. Believe not that you have

been wounded by your enemies darts, if you have stoutly resisted, and repelled them with speed; there befalls you nothing in this which requires to be confessed; for we are, without doubt, obliged to confess our sins, but not the temptations of sin to which we give no consent, nor are knowingly or negligently the cause of bringing them on. Unclean thoughts do not defile us, unless they delight us; for there is great difference between feeling the evil, and consenting to it. And many great saints have sometimes experienced in their flesh very troublesome and violent motions to sin, but having opposed them with their reason and their will, they have served only to gain them new crowns.

SECTION VIII.

Do not imagine that holiness consists in receiving great comforts and great sweetnesses, nor that those tender sentiments, which sometimes produce fountains of tears, are certain signs of a true devotion. These marks are so deceitful, that heretics and pagans have often felt these kind of transports. True devotion is a fervent readiness, residing in the will, to do always what is pleasing to God, and what regards his honor and service; it produces always advantageous fruits, though the spirit remains dry, and the heart wholly barren. To be spiritual, therefore, desire not with too much eagerness these inward delights; but be equally ready either to receive them, or be deprived of them, as it shall please the Almighty God. If he is

pleased to comfort you, accept this favor with an humble acknowledgment; take heed of using this present for your own sole satisfaction, and being so taken with the gift you have received as to forget him that gave it: continue as humble and as quiet when you are visited as when you are not; and place not your security and repose so much in the gifts of God, as in God himself, who is the giver of them, and your last end. If any grace is bestowed on you, how small soever it be, believe that you are unworthy of it, and that you deserve only pains and afflictions, and not caresses. If in praying to Almighty God, or singing his praises, you cannot be so attentive as you would, lose therefore neither your courage nor your confidence; for though your mind may be distracted, your prayers will not cease to be pleasing to God, if you consent not to the distraction, and if you do on your part all you can; if with a good heart you offer to God your will, such as it is, and persevere with care and simplicity in prayer. Be not then impatient, nor excessively troubled, nor afflict yourselves, but after you have done your utmost endeavors, yield yourselves up wholly to God; for he is so good, that he bears with those who, speaking to him in prayer, let sometimes things unworthy of his presence enter into their thoughts. Say to him on these occasions: Lord, thou seest how my heart slips from me, and how it is unhappily distracted in divers places. Have pity on me, who am a poor sinner. Good Jesus, answer for me, and supply my defects. I stagger at

every step, by reason of my weakness; give me thy hand for fear I fall. But, O my God, what thanks ought I not to render to thy goodness, that falling so often, because I am weak and sick, thou art still my protector and support!

Dispose yourselves to receive often the holy communion, to glorify God; and if it is not granted you in effect, as often as you would desire it, let not this disquiet you; but be contented to approach it with heart and will: for none can hinder you from coming to our Lord in this manner, and enjoying him, if you are so minded, a thousand times a day.

SECTION IX.

At night, before you go to bed, seriously recollect yourself, and take a very strict account of all things in which you have been employed that day; after this, betaking yourself to your bed, settle your body in an honest and decent posture; endeavor as much as you can that sleep may come upon you whilst you are thinking on God; strive to be in such manner possessed of him, and the sentiments of his love, at your falling asleep, that you may still be quite full of them when you shall awake. As soon as you shall have opened your eyes, let your heart be lifted up to God; give him your first thoughts and words, saying with the prophet, "O God, my God, to thee do I watch at break of day;" (*Psalm* lxii. 1.) or, as he says a little after, "I will meditate on thee in the morning, because thou hast been my helper." *Ibid.*

7, 8. In this manner ought you to prepare yourself for receiving the spirit of grace and devotion, which in a Christian should never be interrupted. But if you are not as quiet and as free as you would be, to apply yourself to God; or if any filthy dreams have troubled you during your sleep, be not therefore extraordinarily afflicted, but, on the contrary, make good use of it; and as soon as your reason shall have got the mastery, abhor these base illusions, humble yourself, and suffer with patience the disquiet they have given you.

Take all manner of care to avoid not only great sins, but even the least negligence; for if you are not resolved to abstain from every thing that may be displeasing to God, or diminish his love, you will never arrive either at a perfect purity or peace of heart: this kind of defect will perhaps appear light to you, but they will become great if you neglect them; and there is no enemy so little, but may become dangerous when he is contemned. Wherefore St. Gregory said very well, "It is sometimes more dangerous to fall into small faults than into great ones; for greater sins being so evident, that they strike the senses, and often the heart, are more easily amended; but the others being less known, less care is taken to shun them, and so in time they cause many disorders." I say not this, that you should lose your confidence for having fallen into some sin of that nature, nor that you ought to fly from God's presence: but, on the contrary, return to him humbly and with

affection ; speak to him with sorrow of the evil you have committed ; accuse your ingratitude, and weep tenderly before him for having offended so good a Master. Fasten not your eyes only on the greatness of your misery, but consider also the immensity of his mercy, which cannot fail those who return to him with all their heart : and to enter again entirely into his favor, offer to the eternal Father in satisfaction for your sins, the life and death of his only Son ; and beg of his Son to wash away your stains through the merits of his most precious blood, which he has shed for you. After this, hope in God, and continue to serve him with the same courage and the same heart you had before you fell into sin.

Take heed you be not discouraged or grow faint hearted, because you perceive in you some defects, or some passions, which you cannot with all your industry totally subdue : recommend them to the divine mercy, and without ever losing hope, suffer this condition humbly and patiently ; persevere in good, and put yourselves in the hands of Almighty God. If you fall a hundred times a day rise again as often, in hopes he will pardon you ; and resolve every moment to be more attentive and more vigilant over your actions. Confide not, however, in yourselves, nor in your own strength, but in the sole goodness of God, who never fails those who do on their side what they can. Let all the affections of your soul be so directed towards God, that he may be to you all in all things, and all things in him : consider them

not in themselves, nor for what they are ; make them not the object of your delight, but respect them all in God, considering the best and most important qualification they have, which is, that they proceed from him, and represent something of him ; and thus the joy and satisfaction they shall give you, will not only be more pure, but also far sweeter and much greater. Recommend all your works and all your exercises to the divine wisdom, to the end it may direct them and perfect them ; offer them to your Saviour and his eternal Father, as being united and incorporated to the life and actions of his Son, for the glory of his church, and for the salvation of all the believers of which it is composed. By this means, all your works and exercises will become holy, and infinitely pleasing to Almighty God, through the inestimable value of those of his dear Son, under the shadow of which they will pass for good in God's sight, and whence they draw all their grace. This is the counsel given to us by the holy apostle St. Peter, when he invites us to offer to God the sacrifice of good works, that they may be acceptable to him through Jesus Christ. Offer, then, to his divine Majesty all your pains, great and little, internal and external, with all the labors you undergo, from which the present life cannot be exempted, to the end, that all your actions may draw their price and value from the merits of the blood and passion of the Son of God.

SECTION X.

BE not too hasty or too eager in the things you undertake ; be not over-much affected to them, so as to make yourselves their slaves ; but always endeavor to preserve yourselves in a free choice, even in matters of virtue ; follow not the first motions of your heart, if they have too much violence ; consider well ; with prudence and judgment regulate your affections, and, consequently, all the actions they are to produce ; trust not to what they appear at first ; your intention may be good, they also may be good ; but there is no virtue which is to be esteemed a virtue, if it be not accompanied with discretion ; and piety itself, without discretion, may be hurtful. Prudently remove from you whatever may serve as an occasion to make you lose the peace and tranquillity of your heart ; and, above all, let your principal care be to banish from your soul, wrath, covetousness, vain pleasures, fear, joy, sorrow, love, hatred, and all the passions which might disturb its quiet. Be no less careful to preserve yourselves from indiscreet scruples, and from all superfluous thoughts, which may cause trouble to your mind ; be not disquieted at such accidents as may befall you in this life ; since, in effect, all things in this world are transitory, and so all the losses you can suffer are as payments anticipated for the next life, and favors of God for all eternity. In fine, entirely disengage your mind, as well as your affections, from the present world, which passes away

almost in an instant; recollect all your forces and all your powers within yourselves, and there continually communicate alone with Almighty God.

At all times, and in all places, consider his presence with awe; for at what time, and in what place soever you are, he is never absent, but is in all places. Speak to him with confidence, as to a friend whom you have near you, and fear not to discover to him your purposes, and the sentiments of your soul. Accustom yourselves to treat with him in private, and be assured that this familiarity, if I may be permitted to speak so, will be wonderfully beneficial to you. Lose neither courage nor hope, for seeing your heart so inconstant, and finding so much difficulty to master your understanding and fix it on God. Persevere valiantly; it is a horse got loose, chastise it in such manner that it may be obliged to return to its course; for after you shall have with a little trouble accustomed it, it will not only be sweet and easy to think on God, and the things that concern him, but you will be scarcely able to pass an hour without so doing. But if you find your soul sometimes distracted, make it return to its first exercise, and say to it, where hast thou been wandering, O my soul? What advantage has accrued to thee by being separated from thy Lord, having lost thy time, and unprofitably distracted thy heart? Be no longer a wanderer, since there is nothing so much misbecomes the spouse of the heavenly King.

Set also often before your eyes the image of Jesus

Christ, God and man, nailed on the cross, and print it as deep as you possibly can in the bottom of your heart. Reverence with a sincere devotion his holy wounds, which deserve that you should render them eternal homage; hide yourselves in them with a holy confidence, accompanied with humility. If you employ all your senses in this lively representation of your Saviour's torments, there will be no room left for other figures and strange imaginations; and as one nail drives out another, all vain thoughts will fly away from before the presence of this. Dwell, then, as much as you can, with yourselves; treat with yourselves; disentangle your heart, and remove from it all transitory things; look steadfastly on your God, who always beholds you; let your heart speak to him, let your voice sometimes express your love to him, and esteem it the greatest of all losses to be separated one only moment from this sovereign Good, in which all other good things are included.

CHAPTER V.

Of a Christian's most essential Obligations towards God, towards Himself, and towards his Neighbor.

HAVING spoken of the virtues in general, we add this chapter, to treat of them more particularly; and we shall apply what has been hitherto said, to the principal obligations of a Christian, by which he is

to acquit himself of what he owes to God, to himself, and to his neighbors. The prophet Michæas placed the sum of all virtues in these three parts of justice, when he said, "I will show thee, O man, what is good, and what the Lord requireth of thee; verily to do judgment, to love mercy, and to walk solicitous with thy God." *Mic.* vi. 8. For the first of these instructions, which is to judge equitably, particularly respects ourselves; the second, to love mercy, regards our neighbor; and the third, to be careful to please God, pertains to his worship, and the homage that is due to him.

SECTION I.

To begin with the strictest and most important of these obligations, you shall observe, that as amongst precious stones there are some which their kind alone renders much more estimable than others, as rubies, diamonds, and emeralds; so amongst virtues, there are some which of their own nature incomparably exceed the rest. These are they which respect God, and are for this reason called theological; to which we may also add the fear of God, and religion, the property whereof is to honor this sublime Majesty, and whatever concerns the divine worship and service. These are the first and most necessary; and it may be said, that they are not only the first and most considerable, but that they are also those which stir up the others, and give them life and motion. They are in respect to the other virtues, what the

heavens are in respect of the inferior creatures, which depend on their influences and their courses. If you design then to attain to perfection, endeavor to possess them all universally, if you can; for as to make a harp render pleasing music, all its strings must be perfectly in tune, and every one do its office; so to form the life of a perfect Christian, all the virtues must contribute and agree together; but you must particularly cultivate these and advance in them, because they are the term of perfection; and you will be so much the more perfect, as you shall have made greater progress in them. It was hereby, I believe, that many of the holy patriarchs were so signal in virtue; for though they were rich and married, and though the consideration of their families and estates engaged them in many cares and temporal affairs, they ceased not, nevertheless, to be very great saints, because they possessed these high virtues in perfection; and there is nothing more illustrious in their lives, than their exercising themselves in them, as appears in the faith and obedience of Abraham; in the piety, in the devotion, in the submission of David, and in the confidence this great king had in God; he sought no other assistance, nor other refuge in all his troubles; he trusted only in him, as a true child does in a good father, and much more so, since he said, "My father and my mother have left me, but the Lord hath taken me up." *Psalm xxvi. 10.*

Now the securest and fittest means to acquire these excellent virtues, is, to believe, and print firmly in

your minds, that God is truly your Father, and more than your father, since there is no fatherly heart that equals his : there is not any love of a father, or care of a mother, which comes near that he has for you ; and there is none but he who has created you, and stores up for you the greatest of all good things. Being thoroughly persuaded of this truth, always look on him with the eyes and with the heart of true children ; that is, with a loving heart, a tender heart, an humble and respectful heart, a heart obedient and entirely submitted to his holy will. and, in fine, with a heart full of confidence amidst your troubles, and which desires no other protection. but under the wings of his providence. You ought then to behold Almighty God with such eyes, and with such a heart, as often as you shall call him to mind ; and you are obliged to call him to mind as often as you can, that you may by little and little, with the assistance of God's grace, form in yourselves a heart disposed like that of the prophet, who said, " Thy name, O Lord, and thy remembrance, are the desire of the soul. My soul hath desired thee in the night ; yea, and with my spirit within me in the morning early I will watch to thee." *Isai.* xxvi. 8, 9.

There are no words capable to express what this kind of heart and affection towards God is ; the forces of nature are not alone sufficient to give it to us : he therefore only knows it, who has experienced it, and he only possesses it, who has been so happy as to have received it. Wherefore you ought incessantly to beg

this favor, and not to lose the hopes of obtaining it, relying on these words of the Son of God: "If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the good spirit to them that ask him?" *Luke xi. 13.* This is that spirit of which the apostle speaks, when he says, "You have not again received the spirit of servitude and fear, but you have received the spirit of adoption of the sons of God, which causeth us to cry, Abba, Father:" that is to say, that your inclinations are the same for God, as those which children have for their father; that you love him, that you honor him, that you obey him, and that you have recourse to him in all your necessities with the same confidence as children have in their earthly father. This is that heart which our Lord promises you by the mouth of the prophet Ezechiel, in these words: "I will give you a new heart, and put a new spirit within you, and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh and I will give you a heart of flesh, and I will put my spirit in the midst of you, and I will cause you to walk in my commandments, and to keep my judgments, and do them." *Ezech. xxxvi. 26, 27.* In fine, it is this spirit of children, which all the prophets have so often and so unanimously promised you in their writings by the merits of the only Son of God, and which was particularly given to the faithful on the day of Pentecost, and which was afterwards spread over all the church. And to descend more into particulars, if this spirit

reigns in you, and if God has given you this heart of which we speak, these dispositions will appear by the effects, of which the principal, according to St. Vincentius Lirinensis are those, and the procuring of which you ought with the greatest care to endeavor : “ A most fervent love, an extreme fear, a great respect, a most constant zeal, a continual giving of thanks, a praise-sounding-voice, a ready obedience, and an interior joy, which makes you seek God, and find nothing sweet or agreeable but him. To obtain these holy dispositions, pray without intermission, and say to our Lord, O good Jesus, grant that I may love thee most fervently, and with all the powers of my soul ; let me infinitely honor and fear thee, let me have so much zeal for the glory of thy holy name, and in such manner seek to advance it, that the least injury offered to thee may burn and pierce my heart ; let me with very great humility acknowledge thy benefits, and incessantly give thee thanks for them as I ought ; let me continually praise thee, spending days and nights in this exercise.” *Tract. de Vita Spirituali.* And saying to thee with all my heart, as did thy prophet, “ I will bless the Lord at all times ; his praise shall be always in my mouth.” *Psalms xxxiii. 1.* Grant me also this grace, that perfectly obeying thee, I may taste how sweet thou art, to the end I may increase more and more in thy love. and keep thy commandments with more faithfulness.

SECTION II.

THESE affections and these virtues directly regard Almighty God ; but the same saint requires also some others, which more immediately respect ourselves, and reduces them to the number of seven. And first he would, that a true child of God should be always full of a holy confession for his sins. Secondly, that he should be sorry for them, and bewail them all his life, because they have offended God, and polluted his soul. Thirdly, that in respect of his being a sinner, he should desire to be despised, forgotten, and forsaken of all the world, believing himself unworthy to be regarded of men, or receive the least favor from them. Fourthly, that he should consider his body as the source of his sins, and that for this reason he should mortify it, and treat it with all the rigor it deserves. Fifthly, that he conceive an irreconcilable hatred against all his vicious inclinations, and that he labor without ceasing, not only to cut off the branches of them, but also to pluck up totally their roots. Sixthly, that with extraordinary diligence, and exact faithfulness, he endeavor, that in all his actions, in his words, in his senses, and in all the motions of his soul, there may not anything be found contradictory to justice, or which may in the least withdraw him from the law and commandments of Almighty God. And, seventhly, that modesty and prudence appear in all his conduct, so that there be nothing either superfluous or defective seen in it.

SECTION III.

THIS great saint adds also in the same place seven other dispositions, which are no less necessary than the first, and are to be exercised towards our neighbor. First, to have a true compassion of other men's miseries, lamenting them as if they were our own. Secondly, to rejoice sincerely at their prosperity, as we would do at any happiness that should befall ourselves. Thirdly, to bear with quietness and patience the injuries which are done to us, and to pardon them with all our heart. Fourthly, to treat every one with abundance of charity; and that this charity appear not only in our behaviour and discourses, but that our souls be filled with it, that it may be imparted to our neighbor as occasion shall require. Fifthly, to show respect towards all sorts of persons, to behold none without esteeming them more considerable and better than ourselves, and to subject ourselves to all men, as if they were indeed our lords. Sixthly, to keep perfect peace and perfect union with all men, so that on our part, and as far as we can with God's good pleasure, we may think and say the same thing with all; persuading ourselves, that among Catholics there is nothing separate, that they are all one and the same thing; and that, therefore, there ought to be but one and the same sentiment, and one and the same will, between us and others. Seventhly, to be in a sincere disposition, after the example of Jesus Christ, to offer yourselves for all men; that is, to be always prepared to expose our lives for the salvation

of all ; to pray day and night to Almighty God for all ; and to endeavor continually that all be one only thing in Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ in them. But think not that you are thereby less obliged to shun the company of the wicked ; on the contrary, you ought to know, that if there are any whose conversation has been to you an occasion of sin, who have given a hindrance to your spiritual advancement, or who have been the cause that the fervor of charity has decreased in your soul, you ought to fly from them, as from serpents. There is no coal, how thoroughly lighted soever, which is not quenched by being put into water ; and there is none which is so quenched but that it will kindle again if you mix it with others that are burning. Avoid, then, dangerous occasions ; but when there shall be no cause to fear them, converse simply with your neighbor ; examine not too exactly his defects ; if they are so visible that they cannot be concealed, either suffer them with patience, or reprehend them with charity, when you shall judge that your admonitions may be profitable.

But because charity and mercy towards our neighbor is the root and foundation of all these virtues, it is this you ought most to esteem, if you desire to please Almighty God, since there is none which he so often and so earnestly recommends in all the Scriptures. The prophet Zachary relates, that the Jews asking God, whether to please him and fulfil his law, they ought to fast certain days in the year ; God, to let them know what works were most pleasing to him,

answered them in this manner; "Thus saith the Lord of hosts, saying, Judge ye true judgment, and show ye mercy and compassion every man to his brother: and oppress not the widow, and the fatherless, and the stranger, and the poor: and let not a man devise evil in his heart against his brother." *Zach. vii. 9, 10.* These are the very express words which proceed out of the Lord's mouth; but he extols this yet much higher, when he says, "This is my rest, refresh the weary." *Isa. xxviii. 12.* For could God more exalt the works of mercy, than by putting himself in the place of the poor, and taking for his own, the refreshment and assistance which is given the miserable? But, above all, I cannot sufficiently admire what I have read in Ezechiel, where God, with his own mouth, relating the sins which cast the town of Sodom into the extremity of all miseries, reduces them to five, in these terrible words: "This was the iniquity of Sodom thy sister, pride, fulness of bread, and abundance, and the idleness of her, and of her daughters: and they did not put forth their hand to the needy and to the poor." *Ezech. xvi. 49.* What ought you, then, to think of this vice, and how odious in the sight of God is hard-heartedness towards the poor, since he places it at the last step by which this people ascended to the greatest of all abominations! How strange is the blindness of Christians, to make themselves imitators of Sodom, to employ all their cares for the heaping up of treasures, and to place their sovereign felicity in abundance! You have

hitherto heard the law of the prophets; the gospel, which is the law of love, speaks no other language; and can any thing greater be said in favor of mercy, than what the Son of God himself taught us, when he said, that the sentence which shall be pronounced at the last judgment, shall be grounded only on the having exercised or neglected the works of charity? Is there any thing that can make us more esteem this virtue than these following words: "What you have done to the least of these, you have done it to me." *Matt. xxv. 40.* And do we not see that our Saviour has placed the whole accomplishment of the law and the prophets on the only precept of loving God and our neighbor? In fine, Jesus Christ, being ready to depart out of this world, recommended nothing so expressly to his disciples in that great sermon he made to them after his last supper, as to preserve charity, and to bear love to their brethren. "This is my commandment," says our Lord, "that ye love one another as I have loved you." *John xv. 12.* And a little before he said, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if you have loved one for another." *John xiii. 35.* Nor is his heart contented with only giving them this last commandment, but, turning immediately towards his Father, he addresses to him a fervent prayer, that he would imprint this precept in their minds, and that the accomplishment of the law might be manifested in their perfect charity: "Holy Father," says the Son of God, "I pray that they all may be one, as thou,

Father, in me, and I in thee, that the world may believe that thou hast sent me;" (*John* xvii. 11 & 12.) both to let every one know, that the charity of Christians towards one another ought to be so perfect, and so far above whatsoever can be expected from flesh and blood, that there should be no need of any more powerful argument for the convincing of unbelievers, and to make them believe that it was impossible, that they who loved one another with so fervent and so disinterested a love, could be any other than heavenly men.

You see, then, what the charity should be that you ought to have for your neighbor, and with what affection you are obliged to bear with him in his defects, and relieve him in his necessities. But you must observe, that for the making a holy use of all things I have hitherto proposed to you, there is nothing so necessary as to watch continually over yourselves with fear and trembling, and to dread nothing so much as the falling short of your fidelity to God, in the good resolutions you shall have taken for the government of your life. This holy vigilance, and this care, will serve you as a quickening spur to keep you from ever falling asleep in the way of virtue: and you ought never to lose them, even in the midst of your employments and affairs, since this saving fear, and this exact care never to do the least thing which may be displeasing to Almighty God, is, according to the prophet, the third part of justice.

These, then, are the principal virtues which em-

bellish this heavenly life; these are the flowers of this paradise, the stars of this heaven, and the image whereof we have spoken to you, renewed and reformed after the resemblance of Jesus Christ; for the life of a Christian ought to be so perfect, that it should be a pattern of holiness, a light to the world, an evident proof of the true faith, and a mirror in which God's glory may be more clearly seen to shine, than in all the other creatures; as the prophet excellently well signifies: "The valiant and the just shall be called trees, which our Lord has planted, that he might be glorified in them." *Isaias lxi. 3.*

CHAPTER VI.

Twelve principal things which they ought to do, who desire to serve Almighty God.

SINCE I know that several persons desire to have always before their eyes the principal points of this spiritual life, I will endeavor succinctly to set before you most important and most essential things; those which you ought to do, and those you ought to shun; to the end that this abridgment may serve you as a landscape, in which you may, at one view, behold your most particular obligations.

And to begin with those which you ought to do; the first is, that you endeavor to continue always in God's presence by an actual application • but if this

cannot be without intermission, at least both day and night, often lift up your heart to him by fervent aspirations, by short but humble and devout prayers, and beg of him his love and his grace, as being able to do nothing without him.

The second is, that as the bee seeks amongst the flowers only some juice to carry into her hive, so you in all things that shall come before you, in all your conversations, and in all your readings, should always endeavor to collect some pious and devout thoughts, of which you may compose the honey of divine love. And as fire consumes, and converts into its own nature, whatever is put into it, even what is most contrary thereunto, as water, or the hardest metal, as iron or steel; so let your heart be in such manner inflamed with this love, that all things in the world, of what quality soever they be, may only serve for matter to augment its heat.

The third is, that if you fall into any faults, or perceive your strength weakened or dissipated, do not lose your courage, nor suffer yourselves to sink under temptations; but rather turn humbly towards our Lord, acknowledge before him your misery and his mercy; do, on your part, whatsoever shall be in your power, to return to your first state, and follow courageously what you had begun.

The fourth is, that in whatsoever you shall do, you bring always a great purity of intention, which obliges you to examine attentively all your words and actions, and even your thoughts, and to mark the intention

they may have; endeavor to rectify it, and incline it continually towards God, referring to his glory whatever shall proceed from you, and offering yourselves to his Majesty, not only once every day, but as often as you shall begin any thing.

The fifth is, that even in the time of peace and tranquillity you be always prepared to receive humbly all the storms which may rise up against you. It seldom happens, that wrath and hastiness are any way useful; but it is more extraordinary that they would produce any thing that is good; they leave, at least, the conscience always full of scruples, and it is difficult to judge whether one has exceeded in them or not; it is, therefore, one of the passions which you may most easily subdue, and if you endeavor to surmount it you shall live with much repose.

The sixth is, that if you are not a prelate, or the father of a family, you always turn your eyes from the imperfections of others, and cast them on your own; for the first ordinarily draws after it pride, wrath, rash judgment, indiscreet zeal, and divers other motions which trouble the quiet of the heart and conscience; but the second ordinarily produces in souls only humility, self-confusion, and the fear of God.

The seventh is, that you disengage yourselves from all the transitory things of this world, not only as to your soul, but also as to your body, and that you apply yourselves to God with all your heart; for the

more you shall advance in this disposition, the less you will have of man, and the more you will participate of God ; for such souls as are extraordinarily affected to perishable things, change and pass with them ; but such as love God alone, do in their degree participate in the firmness and stability of God. Withdraw yourselves also from the multiplicity of affairs ; for though they are not evil, yet if you are too much addicted to them, they will throw your heart into distraction, and never suffer it to rest perfectly in God.

The eighth is, that you continually fix your eyes on the life of Jesus Christ, on his passion, doctrine, conversation with men, and those divine examples he has left us of all virtues, of humility, charity, mercy, obedience, poverty austerly, contempt of the world, and on the great love he had for our salvation.

The ninth is, that you labor as much as you possibly can to deny yourselves, and resign yourselves up wholly to Almighty God, in such manner that you may cause your own will to die, and that the will of God alone may live in you. It is thus he reigns in us, and we in him. This is the most useful of all the resolutions you can take in the rencounters of this life, prosperous or adverse, sorrowful or pleasing, sweet or bitter, such as it shall please God to send you.

The tenth is, that in all your business, cares and troubles, you shall have recourse to God with humility and confidence. He is your Father, therefore seek him with the heart of a true child ; remit all things to his providence ; take them as coming from

his hand ; drive from you all discontented thoughts, and cast yourselves with confidence before the throne of his mercy.

The eleventh is, that you be in a perpetual acknowledgment of his benefits, and that you give him continual thanks for his favors, whether great or small, not considering so much the quality of the gifts he shall have bestowed on you, as your own unworthiness, the greatness of him who grants them, and the love with which he treats you ; for, in effect, he gives little things with no less love than the more important.

The twelfth is, that you take a firm resolution to cut off and remove far from you all such things, whether corporal or spiritual, as may put the least obstacle to your advancement ; as the too great love of some persons, your studies, books, conversations, and acquaintances, though they appear to you spiritual ; principally when you shall perceive that you adhere too much to them, and that they hinder you from making a greater progress in virtue.

CHAPTER VII.

Twelve sorts of Defects, which ought carefully to be avoided in the Spiritual Life.

THERE are several defects which hinder one from going forward in the spiritual life, and cause many

of those who had a design to profit, to be found after several years the same they ever were. We will here shew you twelve of the most important, that beholding yourselves in them, as in a mirror, you may thereby observe your stains, know the causes that hinder your progress, and seek remedies for them.

The first is, the excessive love of business and outward affairs, which causes one to be deprived of the inward visits and consolations of the spirit, for no person can find without, what he ought to seek within himself.

The second is, the too easy access which one gives to every body. Those who are naturally addicted to this easiness, and take delight in it, cannot rid themselves of company and business, when it is necessary; thus they lose their time, and often fail in their good exercises, because they will not fail their friends: and through overmuch desire to please the creatures the Creator is often displeased.

The third is, not to be humble enough before God, and to act in his presence with too much liberty; thereby is lost that respectful reservedness that is due to him, and which is founded in true humility, and produces chiefly spiritual profit.

The fourth is, to apply one's self to things inconsiderately and with too much eagerness; to follow therein rather the impetuous passion of the mind, than the guide of reason: this excessive fervor destroys the peace and tranquillity of the heart; it is also prejudicial to the affairs themselves for want of

giving them due consideration. There is nothing more true than the assertion of the wise man, who says, "He who hasteth with his feet shall fall." *Prov.* xix. 2. Endeavor, therefore, to act in all things with a sound and steady judgment, which may be called the faithful companion of prudence.

The fifth, into which one sometimes falls without perceiving it, is to presume too much on one's self, and on one's own virtue. This is the vice of the pharisee, who, through too good opinion he had of his own merits, contemned others, and thereby found himself to want the foundation of all virtues, which is humility.

The sixth is, to be inclined to judge evil of one's neighbor, and lightly to condemn his actions. There is nothing that more chills charity, since the good we wish another proceeds partly from the good opinion we have of him.

The seventh is, to have the greatest part of one's heart always set on worldly things. This causes the divine love to retire from us, and be much less liberal of its influences.

The eighth is, to behave one's self coldly in the exercise of prayer, as many do, who come to it with sloth, continue it weakly, and finish it without profit; which being so, it is no wonder if they find themselves deprived of heavenly visitations, and their devotion feeble and languishing.

The ninth is, to be over indulgent to one's self, and very slack in what concerns the mortification

and destruction of the outward man. He who lives for himself will hardly live for God; and he who endeavors not daily to mortify himself, will never be the servant of God.

The tenth is, not to give one's self sufficiently to recollection, but to be found ordinarily distracted, and wandering, out of one's self; whence a man comes to be ignorant of what he is, and knows not how to disesteem himself as he ought, or to watch over his own actions as much as is necessary.

The eleventh is, to love one's self too much; to be too much bent to one's own will and appetites: they that live thus believe the cross of Jesus Christ to be an intolerable burden, and the perfection of the evangelical life a yoke which cannot be borne.

The twelfth is, to be changeable and inconstant in one's purposes; to form good resolutions, but more easily break off from them. It is perseverance alone which finishes the work: without it the whole life passes in vain and frivolous projects, and a man becomes like those vines, which bear grapes all the year, but such as never come to maturity.

THE END.

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